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**Local elites and the Donbas conflict
a comparative case study of Kharkiv city and Donetsk region**

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Local Elites and the Donbas Conflict:
A Comparative Case Study of Kharkiv City and Donetsk Region

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
King's College London

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Abstract

This thesis aims at answering the question why there was a secessionist conflict in Donetsk region, eastern Ukraine, by offering a comparative case study of Kharkiv city and Donetsk region. Drawing on the literature on political opportunity for protest, I argue that to explain the different trajectories taken by these two structurally similar regions, we need to focus on the behaviour of the local elites and activists in the period before the arrival of external agents and the macro-process of escalation to war in one region.

In contrast with the history and identity approach, which – implicitly or explicitly – argues for the primacy of history, local ordinary people and their identities and emotions, I offer my own approach, which focuses squarely on the two groups of actors – the local elites and activists – and their rational action and interaction. Both regions in my story display a comparatively similar propensity to protest and violence, with Kharkiv city being more prone to protest violence, as demonstrated through protest cataloguing and process tracing.

What contrast the two regions are, firstly, the starkly different stances taken by the local elites towards the local protest and changes in Kyiv, and how pro-federal and pro-Russian activists used political opportunities for protest. In my story, the local elites created political opportunities for these activists. I treat the radical changes in the centre in Kyiv in February 2014 as the exogenous shock that informs the local elites' behaviour. I borrow conceptual insights from the literature on patronage, clientelism and, more specifically, Henry Hale's book *Patronal Politics* to explain the divergent behaviour of the local elites following the change in the governing network in the centre. I distinguish the city of Kharkiv and Donetsk region by the type of patronage that applies to their elites. These are diffused and concentrated types of patronage. I argue that in the city of Kharkiv, moderate pro-federal protest developed because the regional elites were functioning under a diffused patronage system. By contrast, in Donetsk, a concentrated patronage region, pro-Russian radicals took centre stage from the start. The result of these pre-war processes is that in one region, political opportunities for the intervention of foreign actors are closed off, whereas in the other they remain open. Therefore, an external actor might start an insurgency in one region only after exploring options in all the regions susceptible to conflict.

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Abbreviations

BYUT – Yulia Tymoshenko’s Bloc “Bat’kivshchina”

HOGA – Kharkiv Regional Administration Building

ISD – Industrial Union of Donbas

SBU – Security Service of Ukraine

SCM – System Capital Management

MVD – Ministry of Interior of Ukraine

OGA or DONOGA – Donetsk Regional Administration

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Note on transliteration

Ukrainian version	Russian version	Version used in the project
Donbas	Donbass	I have used the Ukrainian spelling of the “Donbas” in line with the established academic practice. See (Swain, 2007)
Donets’k	Donetsk	I have used the Ukrainian version after A. Wilson (A. Wilson, 2016)
Kharkiv	Kharkov	I have used the Ukrainian version in line with the established academic practice and after P. Rodgers (Rodgers, 2008)
Hennadiy Kernes (mayor of Kharkiv)	Gennadii Kernes	I have used the Ukrainian version for consistency. The region never seceded from Ukraine.
Slov”ians’k, Horlivka, Makiivka	Slaviansk/ Slavyansk, Gorlovka, Makeevka	I have used the Ukrainian version after A. Wilson (A. Wilson, 2016)
Luhans’k	Luhansk	I have used the Ukrainian version after A. Wilson (A. Wilson, 2016)
Andriy Shyshatskiy	Andrey Shishatsky	I have used the Ukrainian version for consistency.
Mykola Levchenko	Nikolay Levchenko	I have used the Ukrainian version for consistency.
Pavlo Hubarev	Pavel Gubarev	I have used the Russian spelling for this pro-Russian activist

Maps

Map 1. Map of Kharkiv region

Figure 1. Map of Kharkiv



Source: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/09/12/how-eastern-ukraine-is-adapting-and-surviving-case-of-kharkiv-pub-77216>

Map 2. Map of Donets'k region



Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/gb/vector/Donets'k-and-lugansk-regions-of-ukraine-vector-map-gm540597436-96570813>

Introduction

On 1 March 2014, Donetsk city council passed a unanimous vote for a referendum to be held on the future of the Donbas region. Surrounded by agitated pro-Russian protestors, Donetsk mayor Oleksandr Luk'yanchenko issued the following statement: "We support the people's initiative on holding a referendum on the territory of Donetsk Region about the future fate of the Donbas and we ask the deputies of Donetsk regional council to immediately call a referendum on the territory of Donetsk region".¹ He also proclaimed Russia a strategic partner of Donetsk region. As one of the pro-federalisation protest organisers in Kharkiv revealed to me in an interview, in 2014, the elites in Donetsk engaged in strategic bargaining with Kyiv: "In 2014, the oligarchic structures were trying to do the same thing that they did in 2004 when they proclaimed the Ukrainian Federative Republic". According to the organiser, this bargaining could have continued and spawned a local conflict, with protests and the storming and occupation of important state buildings, had it not been for the appearance of Igor Strelkov who disrupted the local elites' bargaining plans. The bargaining was supposed to extract certain privileges, such as decentralisation or the referendum on federalisation, from the centre, and then the insurgency would have died a natural death (Protest Organiser 1; 24 09 2018). This observation was also confirmed in my interview with Journalist 1, an expert on Donetsk region, who stated that Donetsk regional elites bargained with the centre "to preserve their money, freedom, and status" (Journalist 1; 19 07 2019).

In the meantime, in Kharkiv, Luk'yanchenko's counterpart, Hennadiy Kernes, in an interview with a Russian journalist, stated that "calls for Kharkiv to join Russia are a "provocation". He repeatedly stressed that "Kharkiv is part of Ukraine".² On 3 March, Kernes made even stronger worded comments: "If we are law-abiding citizens and do not let our emotions overwhelm us, we will not allow our meetings to become a coup for the benefit of Russia".³ Kernes followed these statements through with a ban through a local court on the meeting demanding a referendum on Ukraine's federalisation on 13 March. He

¹ "Pro-Russian rallies in south, east Ukraine demand referendums", *BBC Monitoring Newstyle*, 1 March 2014.

² "Programme summary of Russian REN TV "Nedelya" 1 March 2014", *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 2 March 2014.

³ "Gennadii Kernes: my zhivem i rabotaem po zakonam Ukrainy", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 3 March 2014.

continued to state in his interviews that “Kharkiv is and will be part of Ukraine”⁴ and never budged on the referendum issue with the activists in Kharkiv.

These seemingly disparate events form the larger narrative of what was to become a major political protest in Ukraine and then, from spring 2014, the largest conflict within Europe’s borders after the breakup of Yugoslavia (Strasheim, 2016). The Euromaidan revolution achieved the dramatic change of government, with the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych, and heralded major political and societal changes.⁵ The revolution also resulted in the most devastating military conflict in modern history of Ukraine in the Donbas area that has now been ravaging both the country itself and its breakaway regions for more than six years.⁶ The conflict started locally, when numerous anti-government protests in the Donbas were sparked by the radical changes of government and the new government’s actions in Kyiv in February 2014. In April 2014, the protests morphed into an insurgency, with the help of Russian military reserve officers, military intelligence operatives, and various non-state actors. In response, the Ukrainian government launched several offensives, some of which were successful, but, later, it was repeatedly repulsed by the separatist and Russian state forces. The conflict has “calcified” since then and become relatively low-scale.

The origins of the Donbas conflict have been widely discussed in the literature. The theories that have addressed the causes of the conflict fall into two broad paradigms. The first set of theories focuses on the role of history and identity in causing the Donbas conflict. Scholars working with these theories argue that the people in the Donbas developed an identity specific to the region. They cite sociological surveys and interviews demonstrating that, historically, the Donbas stood apart from other regions in Ukraine and its residents were particularly prone to support separatism. Following the eruption of violence in Kyiv in January – February 2014 and the sudden change of government in February 2014, the people in the Donbas protested and then mobilised for conflict because their identity was threatened by this change. To a certain extent, therefore, the conflict was bound to occur in the Donbas. The empirical literature

⁴ “Kharkiv was, will be part of Ukraine – mayor”, *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 13 March 2014.

⁵ S. Charap, E. Giuliano and M. Alexeev, “How changing Ukrainian Society impacts the chances for peace”, *Ponars Eurasia*, 6 March 2017.

⁶ “RFE/RL: UN says nearly 10,000 people killed in eastern Ukraine conflict since 2014”, *Kyiv Post*, 15 March 2017.

within this approach is based on the larger theoretical literature on the roles of identities and emotions in conflict.

The other set of theories focuses on the role of foreign actors in causing conflicts. These theories are based on the larger literature which argues that “third parties,” usually neighbouring states, often get involved in conflicts. The overt purpose of this involvement is usually the protection of ethnic kin. As a result, we can expect a neighbouring state to be involved in a conflict in another state if the latter’s state is populated by the neighbouring state’s ethnic kin. Other theories within the same paradigm argue that a minority threatened by the government’s policies in the host state is likely to mobilise and radicalise if the ethnic kin state offers leverage to that minority. These findings have been applied to the conflict in Ukraine and it has been demonstrated empirically and beyond reasonable doubt that Russian non-state actors were indeed involved in escalating what appeared to be a local conflict at first.

At the same time, the most recent research on popular attitudes towards the changes in Kyiv and separatism in the Donbas demonstrates that these attitudes were complex and that they did not easily translate into popular mobilisation for war. My own empirical research also demonstrates that protest dynamics were very uneven in Donetsk region and that overt political protest did not lead to conflict. Most importantly, if Donetsk region is considered in a comparative perspective with a structurally similar city and region (such as Kharkiv), the history and identity approach is inadequate in explaining why conflict occurred in the Donbas. Kharkiv city and Donetsk region shared history, proximity to Russia, broad Anti-Maidan and pro-Russian popular preferences, and the decade-long domination of one political party (the Party of Regions). The approach focusing on the foreign actors does not account for the period prior to the appearance of foreign agents and how political opportunities were opened for specific type of activism that led to the appearance of those agents.

Based on the review of the two major approaches to the study of the Donbas conflict, I formulate the following research questions:

- Why would two regions with similar structural conditions predisposing them to similar protest dynamics take different trajectories?

- Why did the region with a greater general protest potential and greater propensity to protest violence choose a peaceful trajectory?
- Why would two regions geographically proximate to the “external patron,” or “ethnic kin state,” take two different trajectories?
- Who creates political opportunities for specific types of activists?
- Why do the local elites create political opportunities for these specific types of activists?
- How do the specific types of activists use the political opportunities for protest?⁷

My own explanation of the Donbas conflict revolves around the comparison between Donetsk region and Kharkiv city. Drawing on the literature on political opportunity for protest, I argue that to explain the different trajectories taken by the two structurally similar regions, we need to focus on the behaviour of the local elites and activists in the period before the arrival of external agents and the macro-process of escalation to war in one region. That is, we need to focus on the pre-war period when outcomes were by no means certain (Tarrow, 2007; Shesterinina, 2014). In my argument, the phenomenon of the “Russian Spring” emerges out of the local Anti-Maidan contention in both regions.

In contrast with the history and identity approach, which – implicitly or explicitly – argues for the primacy of history, local ordinary people and their identities and emotions, I offer my own approach, which focuses squarely on the two groups of actors – the local elites and activists – and their rational action and interaction. Both regions in my story display a comparatively similar propensity to protest and violence, with Kharkiv city being more prone to protest violence, as demonstrated through protest cataloguing and process tracing.

What contrast the two regions are, firstly, the starkly different stances taken by the local elites towards the local protest and changes in Kyiv, and how pro-federal and pro-Russian activists used political opportunities for protest. In my story, the local elites created political opportunities for these activists. I explain that in Kharkiv city they did so in response to the Euromaidan protest that aimed to

⁷ According to Stathis Kalyvas, insurgencies often witness “the lightning transformation of small, politically marginal groups into state structures” (Kalyvas, 2006, 258).

unseat them, while in Donetsk region the elites opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan because they wanted to stay loyal to Yanukovich's government course.

Following the radical changes of the "informal governing network" in the centre in February 2014, when Yanukovich and his network of the Party of Regions ceased to govern the country and the rival networks of Yulia Tymoshenko and other parties antagonistic to the Party of Regions came to power, while the Party of Regions found itself significantly diminished in government, it is the exogenous shock of this change that informs the local elites' subsequent behaviour. I adapt conceptual insights from the literature on patronage, clientelism and, more specifically, Henry Hale's book *Patronal Politics* to explain the divergent behaviour of the local elites following the change of the governing network. I distinguish the city of Kharkiv and Donetsk region by the type of patronage that applies to their elites. These are diffused and concentrated types of patronage. I argue that in the city of Kharkiv, moderate pro-federal protest developed because the regional elites were functioning under a diffused patronage system. By contrast, in Donetsk, a concentrated patronage region, pro-Russian radicals took centre stage from the start. The result of these pre-war processes is that in one region, political opportunities for the intervention of foreign actors are closed off, whereas in the other they remain open (Activist from Donetsk, Interview 27 07 2019). Therefore, an external actor might start an insurgency in one region only after exploring options in all the regions susceptible to conflict (Protest Organiser in Kharkiv 1, Interview 24 09 2018; Protest Organiser in Kharkiv 2, Interview 28 09 2018; Yudaev, 2015; Strelkov's interview (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014)).

I treat the type of patronage in the region as the independent variable. I start with the basic assumption that regional elites are motivated by several concerns: they want to keep their power, protect their assets, and have access to resources to distribute to their region and possibly themselves. Bearing this assumption in mind, the politics that they inhabit can be characterised by diffusion or concentration of patronage. In diffused patronage politics, regional elites from rival networks are placed next to each other by their patrons. Diffused patronage politics are "plugged into" various patronage channels through which resources are delivered and their elites are constantly engaged in close interaction with each other. This interaction leads to the process of elite learning whereby the elites acquire skills of negotiation with the members of rival networks. The elites in diffused patronage politics do not invest heavily in any

particular patron, which enhances their ability to survive under any network. By contrast, the elites in concentrated patronage regions are heavily dependent on one political patron (Activist from Donetsk, Interview 27 07 2019). Resources are delivered to the region and the elites' assets are protected only when this patron has access to power in the centre. The elites in these regions rarely interact with the members of other networks. Instead, when the governing network changes in the centre, these elites rely on stable bargaining ploys, such as encouraging political protest and separatism, in order to keep their concentrated patronage system. These systems of patronage are conditioned by the centralised nature of Ukraine and the political economy of the regions.

The intervening variable in my theory is the type of protest. Broadly, the type of protest is the protest that is either in the regional elites' interest or not. The elites therefore encourage the types of protest that are in their interest and they discourage the types of protest that are not in their interest. Empirically, I distinguish between the *moderate* pro-federal type of protest and *radical* pro-federal and pro-Russian types of protest. The elites in diffused patronage regions would discourage radical types of protest because these kinds of protest disrupt their relations with the centre and the rival networks. The elites in concentrated patronage regions would encourage radical types of protest because these types of protest have historically been part of their bargaining strategy with the centre. The outcome variables in my theory are peace or conflict. I argue that the elites send signals to external agents from the neighbouring states by opening political opportunities for specific types of protest. External agents from the neighbouring states, therefore, usually appear in concentrated patronage polities where radical protest is encouraged.

I therefore offer an interactive theory in which the main mechanism is the type of patronage in a clientelistic polity. Whether a political protest would develop along radical or moderate lines depends on the type of patronage.

Based on this brief review of the literature and my main argument, I draw the following testable hypotheses:

H1: the more intense the protest and protest violence in the region, the more likely it is to become the site of a violent conflict.

H2: political opportunities for protest that leads to war are created externally by ethnic patrons.

H3: the local elites would encourage or discourage specific types of protest depending on the regional patronage system.

To operationalise the type of polity, I look at the following indicators:

1. The networks to which the people occupying high-ranking positions in the local government, such as governors, mayors, and the regional and city councils' deputies, belonged.
2. The nature of the regional political economy. I look specifically at whether the major enterprises in the regions were state-owned or private.
3. The frequency and nature of interactions between the clients in the regions and their patrons in the centre and between the clients of the different networks within the regions.
4. The kinds of resources that were delivered to the regions.
5. The nature of political conflicts in the polities and how the local elites dealt with those conflicts.
6. Historically, how the local elites re-coordinated themselves around the emerging patrons when the governing network changed in the centre.

To operationalise the protest dynamics, I look at the following indicators:

1. Frequency of political protest in both regions prior to 2013.
2. Frequency of the Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan protests.
3. Frequency and nature of protest violence in 2013 - 2014.
4. The pro-federal and pro-Russian protestors' demands.
5. Local elites' actions and attitudes towards the protests.

In this book, I use the methods of process tracing and protest cataloguing. Process tracing allows to discover the causal mechanism at work in the process of protest. It usually points to the underlying patterns explaining events. On the other hand, protest or event cataloguing describes the aggregate patterns of protest. I have therefore used protest cataloguing to test the hypotheses about the political protest potential and protest intensity in the regions. I found that there were certain aggregate patterns of protest that could only be explained by using process tracing. For example, event cataloguing revealed that Russian flags, the flags of the radical movements such as Donetsk Republic, and chants "Russia" were present at almost all protest events of the "Russian Spring" in Donetsk (Interview with Journalist 1

19 07 2019), whereas in Kharkiv the chants “Russia” and Russian flags gradually disappeared after 16 March 2014. In all, radical protest and clandestine armed mobilisation failed to emerge in Kharkiv. This was not because of the signals from the external patron Russia who, according to my interview with an activist in Kharkiv, sent signals to all the eastern regions (Interview with Activist in Kharkiv, 16 07 2019). Process tracing revealed how the political opportunities for radical protest were opened by the local elites and how these were used by the activists in Donetsk region. Similarly, the aggregate patterns of attacks on ordinary people and violence against the elites can be explained by the inter-elite conflict, which process tracing also pointed to.

In the following chapter, I position the Donbas conflict in the broader empirical and theoretical literature. I analyse the major approaches to the conflict, such as history and identity and the role of foreign actors approach. I also examine Donetsk region and Kharkiv city comparatively and offer my own theory based on the interaction of the two key actors – the local elites and activists. I provide the definitions of the local elites and then engage with the concepts derived from the literature on patronal politics and clientelism, as well as political opportunity, in order to elucidate my theoretical stance towards the conflict. In the second chapter, I discuss the methodology used in this book in more depth. I provide the analysis of the major sources of information and, when it came to interviewing people, how I managed to get access to them. In the following chapter, I test the first hypothesis developed in the theoretical introduction to the study. Using protest cataloguing and process tracing, I reveal that Kharkiv city had greater protest potential than Donetsk region, which predisposed the city to further destabilisation. Moreover, the dynamics of the Anti-Maidan and Russian Spring protests were similar in both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region, with Kharkiv city being more prone to protest violence. In the next chapter, I look at the systems of patronage in Kharkiv city and Donetsk region and discuss my independent variable in more depth. I engage with the key concepts derived from the literature on patronage, such as actual acquaintance and past success of exchange, when discussing the independent variable. I demonstrate that the city of Kharkiv and Donetsk region developed as diffused and concentrated patronage regions respectively. In the fifth chapter, I use the process tracing method to reveal the interaction of the independent and intervening variables in my main mechanism. More specifically, I process trace the Anti-Maidan contention in both regions and then demonstrate how two different types

of protest - radical pro-Russian protest and moderate pro-federal protest – developed in the concentrated patronage and diffused patronage regions respectively. In the conclusion, I draw the lines of my main argument together.

Chapter 1: Explaining the Donbas conflict

1. Introduction

Given the long-standing Western security interests in Ukraine and the disputed role of Russia in the Donbas conflict, media and scholarly attention to the conflict has been intense. Journalists and academics present opposing views of its origins and nature. The explanations of the Donbas conflict have gone through several stages, from simpler (or monocausal) to more complex (or multi-causal). Earlier accounts are concerned with the comparative extent of the involvement of the locals, Russian citizens, and Russia as a state, in the conflict. The Ukrainian government, media, and, to a large extent, their Western counterparts describe the conflict as having been “initiated, directed, supported and organized” (Umland, 2014) by Russian military intelligence operatives (GRU) and, later, regular Russian military units. *Ukrayinska Pravda*, the major online newspaper in Ukraine, portrayed the early protests in the south-east in spring 2014 as being led by Russian “tourists,” that is people bussed in to Ukraine from over the border (A. Wilson, 2014, 128).⁸ This makes the insurgency appear as lacking popular support (Katchanovski, 2016, 2). The Russian government and media, by contrast, present the conflict in the Donbas as a civil war that was sparked by the Ukrainian government’s attempt to suppress the Russian language and the popular uprising of the Donbas’ residents (Katchanovski, 2016, 4).

Scholarly works show similar differences in defining the origin of the Donbas conflict. A few scholars depict the conflict as a Russian invasion, from the start led by Russian military intelligence agents and ideological “volunteers” (Czuperski et al., 2015; Mitrokhin, 2014; Sutyagin, 2015). By contrast, in his book “Frontline Ukraine,” Richard Sakwa adopts a more cautious approach and argues that the provenance of the insurgents in Donetsk region was unclear, “but they were certainly not the “little green men” who had operated so effectively and clinically in taking over the Crimea” (Sakwa, 2015, 155). He consequently characterises the conflict as local, with “genuine ‘popular support’” (Sakwa, 2015, 149). The exchange among Serhiy Kudelia, Andreas Umland and Yuriy Matsiyevsky in 2014 develops along similar lines, with Kudelia arguing that the conflict had primarily domestic sources, while Umland and

⁸ “V Donetske “turisty” s flagami RF mitinguiut za krymskii referendum”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 15 March 2014.

Matsiyevsky depict it as Russia-led (Kudelia, 2014a; Kudelia, 2014b; Kudelia, 2014c; Matsiyevsky, 2014; Umland, 2014). Ivan Katchanovski (2016, 9) examines various live broadcasts, videos, and media reports, which show that the leaders of the insurgency and members of their armed units were mostly residents of the Donbas and other regions of Ukraine (a similar argument is also made by Anna Matveeva (Matveeva, 2016)). Katchanovski cites the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015) statement on the conflict, which characterises it as intrastate, having started primarily because of domestic factors (Katchanovski, 2016, 4). Katchanovski thus characterises the conflict as “a civil war with both direct and indirect military intervention of a foreign state” (Katchanovski, 2016, 11), that is Russia, as do Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll,⁹ and Lucan Way.¹⁰

In the scholarly literature, a great multitude of approaches have been taken to explain the conflict in the Donbas. Each assigns the primary importance to a different factor or a combination of factors. The approaches fall under several broad explanatory paradigms:¹¹ the role of identity and history (Charap et al., 2017; Giuliano, 2015a; Giuliano, 2015b; Kuromiya, 2016; Loshkarev and Sushentsov, 2016; Matveeva, 2016; Matveeva, 2018; Sakwa, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014); the role of the local political and business elites (Buckholz, 2019; Carroll, 2014; Hattori, 2014; Kazanskiy, 2014; Matsuzato, 2017; A. Wilson, 2016); the role of the regional socio-economic problems (Zhukov, 2016); and the role of Russia (Bowen, 2019; Davies, 2016; Kashin, 2014; Kuzio, T., 2015; Kuzio, 2017; Robinson, 2016; Shkandrij, 2014; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). Because of its exceptionally well-documented nature and the relatively easy access to the area before the start of the serious hostilities in summer 2014, it seems that the origins and nature of the Donbas conflict have been explained and no questions remain.

Yet, certain questions are still unanswered, or they are answered intuitively by academics and journalists. The most pertinent of these questions is why, given their similar structural conditions, such as shared history, proximity to Russia, broad Anti-Maidan and pro-Russian popular preferences, and the decade-long domination of one political party (the Party of Regions), did the city and region of Kharkiv

⁹ “Arel D & Driscoll J Conceptualizing the War in Donbas”, *YouTube*, 23 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfQ9IgTNU-M>.

¹⁰ Lucan Way Why Ukraine is in Civil War, *YouTube*, 30 October 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqCmd3xD1vQ>.

¹¹ For other paradigms, see (Kuzio, 2017).

and the region of Donetsk take such starkly different trajectories? Having looked closely at the history of the general political protest and the Euromaidan and “Russian Spring” protest waves in the city of Kharkiv and Donetsk region, I continue to posit this question. The strong argument offered in the academic literature and journalists’ accounts is that the appearance of Igor Strelkov in Sloviansk, Donetsk region, on 12 April 2014, and the Ukrainian government’s decision to launch the Anti-Terrorist Operation on 13 April 2014 to remove Strelkov and his squad, explains why there is war in one region and no war in the other. According to my interview with a (former) Ukrainian journalist (Journalist 1), this decision was guided by high politics and, more specifically, the Ukrainian government’s view that the events in the Crimea and the Donbas were part of “one Russian scenario” (Interview 19 07 2019). However, this answer clouds our understanding of the pre-war dynamics and processes (Shesterinina, 2014), which might have figured in the mind of this external actor when choosing where to start the insurgency (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014). It effectively conflates the micro-level and macro-level processes leading to war (Kalyvas, 2006; Shesterinina, 2014). By micro-level processes, I understand the decisions made on the ground by the local elites and activists and the extent of popular mobilisation. Macro-level processes involve the decisions made at the state level and by external actors. More concretely, Strelkov’s appearance was highly contingent. This external actor might have well appeared in any other region in south-eastern Ukraine (for example, in Izium or Kupiansk in Kharkiv region) (Interview with Journalist 2 15 08 2018) (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014).¹² I demonstrate in the empirical chapters that the reasons why Strelkov appeared in Donetsk region rather than in Kharkiv were connected to the decisions made by the local elites and activists in both regions. In effect, I provide an explanation of why Strelkov appeared in one region and not in the other.

In this chapter, I offer a discussion of the major approaches to the Donbas conflict,¹³ focusing especially on the history and identity approach and the “role of foreign actors” approach. I position the approaches within the larger literature, including the literature on civil wars¹⁴ and emotions and politics,

¹² See the former governor of Kharkiv region Ihor Baluta’s interview from 2016, “Eks-gubernator Khar’kovshchiny Igor’ Baluta: “Dlia menia reshayushchim stalo 22 Aprelia – likvidatsiia separatistskogo gorodka vozle pamiatnika Leninu”, *Censor.net*, 7 April 2014.

¹³ For the narratives of the conflict (in Russian), see (Polikarpov, 2014; Polikarpov, 2015; Severskii, 2015).

¹⁴ For reviews of the major approaches in the vast study of civil wars, see (Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Souleimanov, 2013; Toft, 2012; Wallenstein, P., 2014; Zurcher, 2007).

and the literature on the role of elites in conflict. I introduce the city of Kharkiv as the comparative case that serves to underline the complexity of the Donbas conflict's origins.

Drawing on the literature on political opportunity for protest, I argue that to explain the different trajectories taken by the two structurally similar regions, we need to focus on the behaviour of the local elites and activists in the period before the arrival of external agents and the macro-process of escalation to war in one region. That is, we need to focus on the pre-war period when outcomes were by no means certain (Tarrow, 2007).¹⁵ In my argument, the phenomenon of the “Russian Spring” emerges out of the local Anti-Maidan contention in both regions.

In contrast with the history and identity approach, which – implicitly or explicitly – argues for the primacy of history, local ordinary people and their identities and emotions, I offer my own approach, which focuses squarely on the two groups of actors – the local elites and activists – and their rational action and interaction. Both regions in my story display a comparatively similar propensity to protest and violence, with Kharkiv city being more prone to protest violence as demonstrated through protest cataloguing and process tracing.

What contrast the two regions are, firstly, the starkly different stances taken by the local elites towards the local protest and changes in Kyiv, and how pro-federal and pro-Russian activists used political opportunities for protest. In my story, the local elites created political opportunities for these activists. I explain that in Kharkiv city they did so in response to the Euromaidan protest that aimed to

¹⁵ The focus on the pre-war period is important because, as the voluminous literature on repression and dissent and repression and insurgency shows, once the state engages in fighting the rebel group, contention usually quite dramatically spirals into a full-fledged war, as more and more people become disillusioned with the state and are more likely to join the insurgency (Lichbach et al., 2003; Walter, 1997). As Barbara Walter writes, “once fighting begins, plans are set in motion and attitudes toward the enemy become fixed in ways that are not easily reversible” (Walter, 1997, 336). Elise Giuliano writes on popular attitudes to separatism in the Donbas: “well-attended separatist rallies, statements made by ordinary citizens, as well as popular opinion polls all provide evidence that genuine local support for separatism had developed by the time popular referenda on sovereignty were held in Donetsk and Luhansk” (Giuliano, 2018, 2). As it is known, the popular referenda were held on 11 May 2014, after the ATO operation began in Sloviansk. As communicated to me by an academic studying the conflict, popular attitudes in the Donbas hardened after the launch of the ATO operation in Sloviansk, drawing more and more people into the ranks of the insurgents (Personal Communication, 10 03 2017). If we employ the bargaining theory to the study of this conflict, we need to ask what leads to the processes when negotiation between the state and challengers becomes impossible (Strasheim, 2016; Walter, 1997).

unseat them while in Donets'k region the elites opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan because they wanted to stay loyal to Yanukovych's government course.

Following the radical changes of the “informal governing network” in the centre, it is the exogenous shock of this change that informs the local elites' subsequent behaviour. I adapt conceptual insights from the literature on patronage, clientelism and, more specifically, Henry Hale's book *Patronal Politics* to explain the divergent behaviour of the local elites following the change in the governing network. I distinguish the city of Kharkiv and Donets'k region by the type of patronage that applies to their elites. I argue that in the city of Kharkiv, moderate pro-federal protest developed because the regional elites were functioning under a diffused patronage system. By contrast, in Donets'k, a region with a concentrated patronage system, pro-Russian radicals took centre stage from the start. The result of these pre-war processes is that in one region, political opportunities for the intervention of foreign actors are closed off, whereas in the other they remain open. Therefore, an external actor might start an insurgency in one region only after exploring options in all the regions susceptible to conflict (Protest Organiser in Kharkiv 1, Interview 24 09 2018; Protest Organiser in Kharkiv 2, Interview 28 09 2018; Yudaev, 2015; Strelkov's interview (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014)).

2. History and identity approaches

The scholars who seek to explain the Donbas conflict from the history and identity point of view argue that the people in the Donbas mobilised to defend their regional identity, their linguistic rights,¹⁶ and in response to the relative deprivation¹⁷ they felt after the change of government in Kyiv (Giuliano, 2015a; Kudelia, 2014a; Loshkarev and Sushentsov, 2016; Nicoara and White, 2016; Sakwa, 2015; A.

¹⁶ There is a vast literature that argues that divisions along ethnic lines, polarisation, and political exclusion of entire ethnic groups causes grievances and hence civil war (Cederman et al., 2010; Dyrstad et al., 2011; Horowitz, 1985; Horowitz, 2000; Maney, G., 2007; Toft, 2006; Toft, 2012). It shows that the lack of consensus in such societies can easily propel them to violence. Horowitz argues that violence occurs when ethnic minorities are dissatisfied with how resources are distributed in the country (Horowitz, 1985). Research on post-Soviet conflicts, for example, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, lends credence to this view. It is argued that Georgia's rejection of the proposals pertaining to the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and their languages was one of the most significant causes of violence (Souleimanov, 2013). For the discussion of what distinguishes non-ethnic from ethnic civil wars see (J. Fearon, 2004a; J. Fearon, 2004b; J. Fearon and Laitin, 2011).

¹⁷ On the role of the deterioration in social life leading to conflict, Gurr writes: “the greater the intensity of [relative] deprivation, the greater the magnitude of violence” ([1970]: (Gurr, 2015, 9). To Gurr, “mass revolutionary and secessionist movements are most likely to develop ... if discontent is widespread and intense among both elite and mass, the result of relative or absolute deterioration of many conditions of social existence” ((Gurr, 2015, 343).

Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). Andrew Wilson (A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014) views this identity within the historical context and accounts for what gave rise to the peculiar political beliefs held by the residents of the Donbas. Anna Matveeva characterises the conflict as an identity one in that “different sections of Ukraine’s population developed conflicting perspectives of the past, the role of Russia in Ukraine’s history, and of how relations with the West should evolve. These differences laid the foundations for what became polarised identities and mutually exclusive ideologies” (Matveeva, 2016, 25). These scholars cite numerous sociological surveys conducted both prior to the “Russian Spring” protests and as the protests were underway,¹⁸ which demonstrate a higher propensity of the Donbas’ residents to separatism. They also discuss the various facets of this identity, such as localism conditioned by the poor integration of the Donbas into the rest of Ukraine, post-Soviet nostalgia, and the fear of fascism, that might have contributed significantly to the anti-government feeling in the Donbas and, subsequently, to the war onset (Giuliano, 2015a; A. Wilson, 2016).

Some scholars argue that the mobilisation in the Donbas occurred because of various popular emotions involved.¹⁹ The work by Olga Nicoara and D. White (Nicoara and White, 2016), for example, focuses on the emotion of fear galvanised by the Russian propaganda and how important it was for the mobilisation in the Donbas. In his contribution, harkening back to the work of Roger Petersen, Serhiy Kudelia (Kudelia, 2014a) devotes some consideration to the argument that the people of the Donbas mobilised because they experienced intense group emotions, “specific to the region,” such as fear and resentment. According to Serhiy Kudelia and Andreas Umland, the violence perpetrated in Kyiv in

¹⁸ The most important and most cited of these surveys is “Mneniya i vzglyady zhytelei Yugo-Vostoka Ukrainy April 2014” (“The opinions and views of the people of the South-East of Ukraine April 2014”) conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology between 8 and 16 April 2014.

¹⁹ The approaches to the Donbas conflict generally have not engaged the literature on emotions and political violence in a systematic fashion. Recent developments in social science have stressed the importance of emotions in politics in general (Ahmed, 2004; Brader, 2006; Engelken-Jorge et al., 2011; Lakoff, 2008; Nussbaum, 2013) and for mobilisation and protest, in particular (Aminzade et al., 2001; Baele et al., 2016; Clough, 2012; Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 1997; Jasper, 1998; Jasper, 2011; Jasper, 2014; Jennings, 2016; Kaufmann, 2005; Pearlman, 2013; Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 2011; Wood, E., 2001; Wood, 2003). If prior to this “emotional turn” (to paraphrase the “cultural turn”) in mobilisation studies, protesters were often portrayed as irrational agents driven by emotions (Le Bon, [1895] 2012) (Smelser, 1962) and their protests were, therefore, seen as not worthy of a serious scientific enquiry (Weber, 1968), the scholars of new social movements have demonstrated that emotions occupy a rightful place in the repertoire of contention of many social movements and do indeed merit serious study (Goodwin et al., 2001). It is now taken for granted that emotions matter and that people participate in political movements not only because of material benefits but (sometimes predominantly) due to their pursuit of collective identity, attachment to ties connecting them with the wider group and what Wood has called “the pleasure in agency” (Wood, 2003, 235). For the definition of emotions, see (Damasio, 1994; Elster, 2007; Elster, 1998; Elster, 1999; Frijda, 1986; Solomon, 1981; Zajonc, 1980).

January – February 2014 by both the Right Sector and other radical groups was approaching a scale Ukraine had never witnessed before (Kudelia, 2014a; Umland, 2014). For Kudelia (Kudelia, 2014b), Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll,²⁰ the conflict in the Donbas started with the violence erupting on Hrushevskiy street in Kyiv on 19 and 20 February 2014, when the elites lost control over the radical forces and ultranationalist parties became more visible. The numerous marches held in honour of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Stepan Bandera during the Euromaidan provoked fears in the Donbas. According to one survey, Stepan Bandera was viewed in negative terms by 79% of the Donbas residents (Kudelia, 2014c). Sakwa cites similar findings, showing some 60% of Donetsk residents fearing “Bandera’s followers,” or “Banderovtsy,” and 71% of Donetsk and 60% of Luhans’k residents believing that “the Maidan events represented an armed change of government organised by the opposition and the West” (Sakwa, 2015, 149). According to the local political elites in Donetsk, the “chaos and highhandedness (*proizvol*) on the Maidan” were the main causes of the pro-Russian resistance in Donetsk.²¹

Further, both the legitimacy and the composition of the new government announced on 27 February 2014 caused much consternation among the people of the Donbas, as, in contrast with the previous government, composed mostly of the Party of Regions’ politicians loyal to Yanukovych, the new interim government consisted of politicians from Bat’kivshchina and Svoboda parties which were historically antagonistic to Yanukovych and the Party of Regions.²² As Nicolai Petro argues, with the ousting of Yanukovych and advent of the new government, “the Faustian pact” between the elites in Kyiv and the population was broken (Petro, N., 2015, 31). These sudden changes consequently resulted in the emotions of mistrust. It can also be said that there was a degree of “ethnic exclusion” (Cederman et al., 2010) causing a further sense of deprivation among the people of the Donbas because there were no representatives of the Party of Regions in the new government. The surveys conducted in early April 2014 (widely cited by scholars) show that approximately half of all respondents in Donetsk and Luhans’k regions expressed strong confidence in the illegality of the interim president Turchynov and the new

²⁰ Arel and Driscoll, “Conceptualising”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfQ9IgTNU-M>.

²¹ “Donets’kii gorsovet reshil shchitat’ RF strategicheskim partnerom”, *RBC UA*, 1 March 2014.

²² See “Who is governing Ukraine”, *Guardian*, 4 March 2014.

government, compared to about a third or fewer respondents in other south-eastern regions (KIIS poll, April 8 – 16, 2014).²³ The new government therefore spelled threat to the population of the Donbas, as it violated their cognitive beliefs, that is their beliefs about how the country should be governed. The advent of the new government, therefore, was, to an extent, “a moral shock” (Jasper, 1997) and a “threat to the quotidian” (Snow et al., 1998). In contrast to the year 2004, when the Orange Revolution similarly spelled threat to the Donbas residents, this time Yanukovych had little chance of coming back to politics, while the Party of Regions suffered major defections and eventually ceased to exist. I elaborate on this in the empirical chapter on the local elites and the chapter on the Anti-Maidan and Russian Spring.

Three powerful arguments emerge from this literature. In what follows I seek to situate these arguments in the larger literature, provide some analysis, and introduce the city of Kharkiv as the comparative case. Firstly, it is argued that the violent trajectory taken by the Donbas was determined by its history. Andrew Wilson (A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014) gives a nuanced account of the Donbas’ history and argues that this history – partially, as he emphasises in the 2016 article – contributed to the conflict. The second powerful argument within the history and identity approach is based on the sociological surveys²⁴ cited by scholars that demonstrate a greater propensity of the Donbas residents, and particularly of ethnic Russians, to separatism (Giuliano, 2018).²⁵ Therefore, it is assumed that, due to this greater propensity to separatism (a minority opinion nonetheless (Giuliano, 2018), the conflict was bound to occur in the Donbas (Gentile, 2015). The third argument is implicitly based on the literature on emotions and political violence and states that the emotions of fear and resentment galvanised by the violence and changes in Kyiv provided grounds for mobilisation and subsequent conflict in the Donbas.

²³ “Mneniia i vzgliady zhitelei yugo-vostoka Ukrainy: Aprel’ 2014”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 18 April 2014.

²⁴ Beissinger points to some problems inherent in sociological surveys: “In periods of political upheaval researchers face a very different problem: Public beliefs change so quickly that they are almost impossible to capture. In such an environment public opinion poll merely reflect a frozen moment in time. Even when polls are conducted repeatedly, pollsters rarely frame questions that systematically capture attitudes relevant to a period of momentous change, since issues once beneath the surface of politics become explicit, and the practice of polling is itself affected by the discursive transformations society is experiencing” (Beissinger, 2002, 43).

²⁵ As such, support for separatism was always the highest in the Donbas. According to an all-nation poll conducted by “Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Fond” from 16 to 30 March 2014, the separatist idea was supported mostly by the people in the Donbas, at 18% of respondents; by comparison, 10% supported such an idea in the east in general; the idea of the independence of the south-east and unity with Russia was supported by 11% of the east and 27% of the Donbas. See “Chy vlastyvi ukrayintsiam nastroyi separatyzmu – zahal’nonatsional’ne opytuvannia”, *Fond Demokratychni initsiatyvy imeni Il’ka Kucheriva*, 11 April 2013. However, there is no evidence that separatism was a mass phenomenon (Giuliano, 2015a; Kudelia, 2016; A. Wilson, 2016).

The argument based on the history of the Donbas provides us with the helpful background knowledge of the region and its ethno-linguistic make up. It gives us a sense of how the Donbas was integrated into the rest of Ukraine, without however specifying the exact nature of this integration. It also gives us an understanding of some of the major rhetorical devices, concepts and myths used by the agents of mobilisation in the Donbas, such as, to name a few, Novorossia, “a variable Russian term”, as Andrew Wilson calls it, which the Donbas belonged to in the Tsarist times (A. Wilson, 2016, 633 – 634), and Donets’k-Kryvyi Rih Republic (Donets’ko-Krivorozhskaia Respublika in Russian), an entity formed out of Donets’k and Luhans’k regions that enjoyed a brief independence in 1918 (Gilley, 2015; Kornilov, 2017; Laruelle, 2016; A. Wilson, 2016, 635). Yet, it can also be argued that the historical approach – taking us back to the Tsarist times and beyond – is too “deep,” in that it cannot account for the behaviours of the two groups of actors we are concerned with – the local elites and activists – that have been conditioned by a more recent past and the process of protest, and how these contributed to the onset of the war. More importantly, when considered in a comparative perspective with a region that had a very similar history, such as Kharkiv region, the historical approach to the Donbas conflict provides an insufficient answer to the questions posed.

The identity approach to the Donbas conflict implies that identity has to be sufficiently strongly felt and cohesive to provoke people to commit violent actions.²⁶ For example, the research by Anastasia Shesterinina on Abkhazia demonstrates that the Abkhaz developed a strong identity around the norms of “patriotism, heroism, and masculinity” (Shesterinina, 2014, 88), which eventually came into conflict with the Georgians. The Abkhaz experienced real threats in the past, due to the turbulent history of Abkhazia. “The history of war,” Shesterinina (2014, 91) writes, “which subordinated Abkhazia to various powers and greatly reduced the Abkhaz population in Abkhazia, sharpened a sense of existential threat, attachment to the Abkhaz nation, and belonging to the land”. In the case of the Donbas, the picture is more mixed. The most recent research on attitudes in the Donbas has demonstrated how nuanced the attitudes of the Donbas’ residents were both to the changes in Kyiv and to the pro-Russian protest. The

²⁶ There is also a certain bias in the “identity and history” literature. Kuzio (2017) describes what appears to be a highly dysfunctional society in the Donbas that was perpetually in the grip of centrifugal forces and always ripe for an anti-regime revolt. As Andiy Portnov argues, the focus on identity contributes to unhelpful stereotyping (Portnov, 2016).

new research by Elise Giuliano (2018) demonstrates that ethnicity does not map easily into political attitudes, and that people with a defined ethnic identity can be divided on certain key political issues.²⁷ Her research into attitudes in the Donbas also demonstrates that the residents of the Donbas were “most concerned with economic issues, as well as with the threat of violent unrest and rise of radical extremism, rather than with geopolitical issues concerning Russia and cultural issues, such as language and media” (Giuliano 2018, 8).²⁸ Furthermore, as Giuliano (2018, 2) writes, “well-attended separatist rallies, statements made by ordinary citizens, as well as popular opinion polls all provide evidence that genuine local support for separatism had developed by the time popular referenda on sovereignty were held in Donetsk and Luhansk,” that is after the launch of the Anti-Terrorist Operation on 13 April 2014. This fluidity of identity and gradual hardening of attitudes after the launch of the ATO further highlights the need to consider the pre-ATO period, when the Donbas residents’ attitudes towards the issues were not contaminated by the repressive state action and were similar to the attitudes of the people in Kharkiv.

The identity approach implicitly engages the broader literature on emotions and politics and points to the primacy of ordinary people and their emotions in conflict. The voluminous literature on emotions and politics directs our attention to the importance of popular emotions for social movements, more generally ((Aminzade and et al, 2001; Goodwin et al., 2001) and conflicts, in particular (Bale et al., 2016; Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 2011; Petersen, 2001; Wood, E., 2001; Wood, 2003). It can be argued that structural conditions, such as shared history, as well as the presence of certain ethnicities and linguistic groups, predispose localities to certain emotional climates or orientations (Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Elster, 1999; Williams, 1977). Bar-Tal, Halperin, and de Rivera (2007, 443) introduce the concept of “collective emotional orientation” and define it as “the tendency of a society to express a particular emotion.” To Bale et. al, “members of any given group are characterized by a common particular way of apprehending and understanding the social world through a particular overarching logic,” which is called “emotional worldview” in their model (Bale et al., 2016, 723-724). They (2016: 724) define the emotional worldview as “an all-encompassing and coherent logic of understanding the

²⁷ Also see (Giuliano, 2011).

²⁸ The prevalence of local concerns over international or geopolitical ones has been documented by Kalyvas in his study of the Greek region of Argolid (see the empirical chapter 9 in (Kalyvas, 2006)).

social world that is based on the group's collective memory itself made of socially constructed axioms ... and myths ... that are reproduced in language." Emotions, in this way, are constitutive of social relations and action, and are not simply individual psychological reactions; they are intersubjective, collective experiences. These collective emotional experiences predispose people to react in certain ways to the change in their environment, be it social, economic, or political change, in order to ensure their own survival (Newhagen, 1998). Empirically, we would, therefore, expect people with shared history and emotional orientation to react to the changing environment in a similar way.

If we further engage with the literature on particular emotions, such as fear, resentment, and anger – as hinted in the approaches taken by Nicoara (2016) and Kudelia (2014a) on the Donbas conflict - and apply its findings to conflict settings, we would find that both Kharkiv city and Donets'k region were similarly predisposed to conflict, due to the emotions their residents were experiencing. The literature on emotions and conflicts suggests several pathways to violence. The emotion of fear, for example, arises when "a breakdown of the quotidian" (Snow et al., 1998, 1) or "suddenly imposed grievances" (Snow et al., 1998, 7) or a "moral shock" (a "moral shock," as defined by Jasper, is "a reaction to an unexpected event or a piece of information that creates a sense of outrage to such an extent that an individual becomes inclined toward political action" (Jasper, 1998, 409)) occur by themselves or in different combinations. An event which "penetrates and disrupts, or threatens to disrupt, taken-for-granted everyday routines and expectancies," the so-called quotidian (Snow et al., 1998, 2), can cause fear. When the quotidian breaks down, "routines and understandings associated with everyday patterns of making do," Snow et al. (1998, 5) write, "are now matters of doubt, uncertainty, and sometimes even confusion" (Barbalet, 1998, 168). Fear can also occur in reaction to "suddenly imposed grievances" (Snow et al., 1998), which captures the sense of immediate threat that an accident or some change in the social order poses to the communities. In short, the emotion of fear arises as a result of unexpected and sudden changes in one's surroundings, when the quotidian is disrupted or when there is a strong moral shock (Frijda, 1986).

Sudden changes in the environment, particularly when the status hierarchies are rearranged, with one ethnic group being suddenly downgraded, also cause the emotions of anger and resentment (Aminzade and et al, 2001; Barbalet, 1998; Horowitz, 2000; Kemper, 1978; Petersen, 2002). Scholars

highlight that the emotions of anger make people less risk averse, whereas the emotions of fear make them more risk-averse (Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Bodenhausen, G., 1993; Frijda, 1986; Lerner and Keltner, 2000). The action tendency of fear, as defined by Frijda (Frijda, 1986, 72), is the urge to separate oneself from aversive events and preserve the self. Under the influence of anger, by contrast, particularly righteous anger, for example, in the face of blatant injustice, individuals begin to value their own security less and engage in risky behaviour, such as engaging in direct political action against economic and political status quo and assaulting government forces (Gamson, 1992; Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Lerner and Keltner, 2000; Pearlman, 2013).

If we look closely at the Anti-Maidan, pro-federal and pro-Russian protest dynamics in the two regions of Kharkiv and Donetsk, we discover that the people in those two regions were animated by similar emotions. The Euromaidan and the sudden change of government in Kyiv were the events of paramount, for some, life-changing importance. As Fillipova and Giuliano (2018) demonstrate in their research on opinions in Kharkiv, many Kharkivites harboured strong anti-Maidan attitudes, as did their Donetsk counterparts (anger and resentment) (Giuliano and Filippova, 2018). Many were equally concerned about the economic situation in Ukraine (fear) (Giuliano, 2018, 22). We would, therefore, expect both regions to be strongly emotionally affected by the violence and sudden changes in Kyiv. As a result, we would expect the people of Kharkiv and people of Donetsk, who resided in regions with arguably similar “emotional climates,” to be willing to engage in protest with similar intensity and predisposition to violence. We would expect them to take to the streets with similar slogans, display a similar propensity to violence and occupation of central streets. In short, if we proxy the strength of the emotions of fear, anger, resentment, and perceived grievance by the level of protest and protest violence, then we should expect to see similar protest dynamics in both regions.

Based on this theoretical discussion we can formulate the first testable hypothesis:

H1: the more intense the protest and protest violence in the region, the more likely it is to become the site of a violent conflict

As I demonstrate through process tracing and protest cataloguing in Chapter 3, regions can demonstrate comparable protest dynamics and protest violence. In fact, the region that does not in the

end become the site of conflict can demonstrate greater propensity to protest violence; the violence there can be more systematic. The protest violence by itself, therefore, does not explain why one region evolves along a conflictual path and the other does not. It is not the scale of violence and the strength of popular emotions, but strategic actions by two distinct groups of actors – the local elites and activists – which determine peace or conflict outcomes. Additionally, from the methodological point of view, it is extremely hard to test the theories of emotions and politics because all the events in question took place in the past and the participants' memories of these events can be faulty. Before developing my theoretical framework further, I highlight the geographical and historical similarities between the two regions of Kharkiv and Donetsk. Moreover, I demonstrate, that Kharkiv region was considered “strategic” by the Ukrainian government.

3. Kharkiv and Donetsk compared

Kharkiv and Donetsk regions share the border with Russia. Kharkiv region's border with Russia extends to 315,5 kilometres, while Donetsk region's border with Russia is 178,5 kilometres long. It takes approximately 30 km to reach Kharkiv city from Russia. Both regions share a similar historical trajectory. From the late 17th century, the areas around Kharkiv were being populated by both Ukrainians and Russians (Matsuzato and Yakushik, 2002, 7, 9). Later on, Kharkiv city became one of the “heartland cities” of the Russian Empire and remained so for two hundred years (Timofeev and Wade, 1994; Westrate, 2014, 46 -48). Westrate (2014, 52) writes on Kharkiv: “By the late nineteenth century, many people considered Kharkiv a “*Russian*” city; others considered it a “*Russified*” city (different opinions of the same trend). The population was predominantly Russian-speaking; no more than a quarter of the city's residents considered Ukrainian their native language” (emphasis in the original). He further explains the borderland orientation of Kharkiv city (43): “Kharkiv's history is that of a city *between*, a Russian-speaking city surrounded by mixed-ethnicity villages, shifting over time between being a military stronghold on the edge of empire and being a heartland city, a center of economic and cultural activity” (emphasis in original). Kharkiv was the capital of the Ukrainian SSR between 1920 and 1934 and remained one of the biggest cities in the Soviet Union.

Similarly, Donets'k region, as part of the Donbas (Donets'k and Luhans'k regions combined), was one of the leading industrial regions of the Russian Empire and then of the Soviet Union (A. Wilson, 1995, 267). With the early history of the Donbas being bitterly contested (A. Wilson, 1995, 271), and with the debates on the relative influence of Zaporizhzhian (Ukrainian) and Don (Russian) Cossacks in the Donbas in the 16th to 18th centuries still not settled, by the late 19th century, the Donbas was being thoroughly Russified (A. Wilson, 1995, 273). As Wilson (1995, 274) writes, "it was only with mass industrialization and urbanization from the 1860s onwards that the region began to take on a pronounced Russian character," so that Russians speakers constituted over 50% of the Donbas by 1900 (Pirie, 1998, 48). Russian peasants formed the overwhelming majority of the Donbas' labour force and population (Friedgut, 1994, 71). Most of the Donbas' numerous working-class was Russian (Wynn, 1992, 3), with the Russian language dominating the big cities of Donets'k and Luhans'k (Friedgut, 1994; Kuromiya, 1998). Ukrainians were more prevalent in the countryside. In 1907 – 1908, 80% of the 180,000 miners in the Donbas-Dnepr Bend were migrants, mostly from the black-soil villages of central Russia (Wynn, 1992, 45). Like Kharkiv, Donets'k became one of the leading industrial centres of the Russian Empire (Subtelny, 1994, 267). The Donbas enjoyed a brief autonomy in 1918 when Donets'k-Kryvyi Rih Republic was proclaimed (Journalist 1, Interview 19 07 2019) (Friedgut, 1994, 352 – 359) (it became one of the foundation myths of what is now Donetsk People's Republic). This autonomy was forcibly ended by Lenin and the region became part of the Soviet Union. Following the demise of the Ukrainisation policies in the 1930s (Liber, 1992; Liber, 1998), the region continued to be populated mostly by Russian speakers. Under the Soviet Union, both Kharkiv and Donets'k regions became heavily industrialised, and by 1991, they were two of the most industrialised regions in Ukraine. The rapid industrialisation of Ukraine led to the continuing influx of Russian speakers in both regions, so that by 1989 Russian was the dominant language in both regions, more so in Donets'k. By the mid-1990s, both regions featured high on the index of russification (Hesli, 1995).

These similar historical trajectories shaped both regions' broad Russophone identity. During the 20th century, both regions witnessed a decrease in the number of ethnic Ukrainians (Dnistrians'kii, 2008, 75), while the number of Russians increased steadily (Dnistrians'kii, 2008, 76; Pirie, 1998, 94 – 95). Linguistically, in Kharkiv, the number of people who regarded Ukrainian as their native language

decreased from 61%²⁹ in 1959 to 50% in 1989 (Dnistrians'kii, 2008, 78). In Donetsk, the decline was comparable, from 44% to 30%. By contrast, the number of people who regarded Russian as their native language increased in Kharkiv from 37% to 48% and in Donetsk from 53% to 67% during the same period (ibid.). After 1991, in Donetsk 67% of residents identified themselves as Russians (Matveeva, 2018, 28). In the Donbas overall, the proportion of Russian speakers was over four-fifths at the end of the 1990s (Smith and Wilson, 1997, 847). By 2001, the ethnic composition of both regions in comparative perspective was as follows.

Table 1. Number and composition of the population of Ukraine by All-Ukrainian population census, 2001

Region	Population (in thousand)	Actual population (in %)	
		2001	1989
Dnipropetrovs'k	3561.2	100	100
Ukrainians	2825.8	79.3	71.6
Russians	627.5	17.6	24.2
Donets'k	4825.6	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	2744.1	56.9	50.7
Russians	1844.4	38.2	43.6
Zaporizhzhia	1926.8	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	1364.1	70.8	63.1
Russians	476.8	24.7	32.0
Luhans'k	2540.2	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	1472.4	58.0	51.9
Russians	991.8	39.0	44.8
Mykolaiv	1262.9	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	1034.5	81.9	75.6
Russians	177.5	14.1	19.4

²⁹ The decimals are omitted here.

Odesa	2455.7	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	1542.3	62.8	54.6
Russians	508.5	20.7	27.4
Kharkiv	2895.8	100.0	100.0
Ukrainians	2048.7	70.7	62.8
Russians	742.0	25.6	33.2

Source: Ukrainian Census 2001 <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/>.

As one can see, both Kharkiv and Donetsk are comparable by population and proportion of Russian speakers.

Nicolai Petro calculated the percentage of Russians and Russian speakers in the regions that supported Yanukovich in 2004, thus further illustrating the ethnic make up of both regions.

Table 2. Percentage of Russians and Russian speakers in regions that supported V. Yanukovich in 2004

Region	% who consider themselves Russian	% of Russian speakers
Kharkiv	24%	74%
Donetsk	39%	93%
Odesa	11%	85%
Dnipropetrovsk	16%	72%
Mykolaiv	26%	66%
Zaporizhzhia	30%	81%
Luhansk	55%	89%

Source: (Petro, N.,2015, 21)

Interestingly, in 1996, Kharkiv city and Moscow signed an agreement of economic cooperation,³⁰ and in 2002, the city of Kharkiv was dubbed “the capital of Russian-Ukrainian relations”.³¹ The city hosted various Ukrainian-Russian business forums, and there was a lively economic cooperation between Belgorod region in Russia and Kharkiv, particularly in aviation.³² Under the governor Yevhen Kushnaryov (2002 – 2005), there was a veritable boom of economic cooperation between Russian regions and Kharkiv.³³ Due to these trade links, geographical proximity, ease of travel and other links, therefore, we might expect a high number of ethnic Russians in the region.

By 2012, in Donetsk, 38.2% of people were ethnic Russians (Moser, 2013, 40), and 74.9% of people preferred using Russian publicly and privately (Moser, 2013, 42). According to Margrethe Søvik’s research on language practices in Kharkiv, in 2010, the city was regarded as primarily Russian-speaking (Søvik, 2010, 5) (Protest Organiser 2, Interview 28 09 2018), so that by 2014, Kharkiv became the largest Russian-speaking city outside of the Russian Federation (Westrate, 2014, 3). Russian identity was more pronounced in Kharkiv in the 1990s than later. Timofeev and Wade write on Kharkiv as of 1994: “As a result of its location and population mix, Kharkivites have a peculiar relationship to both Russian and Ukrainian authorities. Many residents feel a strong cultural identity with Russia. About 600,000 Kharkivites have relatives and close friends on the Russian side of the nearby border. Many who are of Ukrainian or part-Ukrainian nationality are to greater or lesser degree Russian or ‘Soviet,’ by culture and are not particularly interested in a Ukrainian cultural or political revival (although not necessarily hostile to it either)” (Timofeev and Wade, 1994, 88).

At the same time, identity in these Ukrainian regions is famously blurred and uncertain. Nearly a decade of sociological research has demonstrated that Russian and Ukrainian identities were fused in Ukraine and, by all means, coexisted peacefully (Fournier, 2002; Giuliano, 2015a; Pirie, 1998; Polese and Wylegala, 2008; Weller, C., 2002). As Paul Pirie demonstrates, by the early 1990s, due to widespread

³⁰ “Tovarooborot mezhdru khar’kovskoi i moskovskoi oblastiami cherez dva goda mozhet sostavit’ 500”, *Status Quo*, 10 November 2004.

³¹ “Khar’kov iavljaetsia stolitsej rossijsko-ukrainskikh otnoshenij – B. Gromov”, *Status Quo*, 22 March 2002.

³² “Khar’kovskaia oblast’ zainteresovana v tom, chtoby na zasedanii mezhpriavitel’svennoi komissii byl podpisan riad ukrainsko-rossijskikh dogovorov – E. Kusharev”, *Status Quo*, 6 June 2002.

³³ “Khar’kov dolzhen stat’ tsentrom edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva s Rossiei, Belarus’iu i Kazakhstanom – V. Yanukovich”, *Status Quo*, 11 October 2004.

intermarriage in Ukraine, the identities of many Ukrainians became very blurred or “hybrid” (Pirie, 1998). According to Kerstin Zimmer’s research, many Ukrainians and Russians in the Donbas, in particular, identified themselves as “Soviet” (Smith and Wilson, 1997; Zimmer, K., 2007, 116), which can be regarded as a supra-national identity. According to Søvik’s research in Kharkiv in 2010, “half of the total respondents (50.5%) claim to feel both Ukrainian and Russian and say they use Russian as their home language, and an additional 11% claim to feel Ukrainian and speak Russian. Only 14.1% of these respondents may be categorized as either Ukrainian-speaking self-defined Ukrainians (5.3%) or Russian-speaking self-defined Russians (8.8%)” (Søvik, 2010, 13).

Sociological surveys have demonstrated that the issues involving language worried few people in Ukraine. According to a poll conducted by GFK Ukraine in March 2010, the so-called “forced Ukrainisation and the ousting of the Russian language” concerned 4.8% of respondents overall, with the percentage in the east of Ukraine being slightly higher, at 6.6%. The vast majority of respondents worried about inflation and unemployment (Moser, 2013, 61). The survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre in May – June 2012 revealed that the majority of the respondents were concerned about the economy, high prices, and unemployment. The status of the Russian language ranked 31st on the list of 33 issues (ibid., 61). Other sociological surveys demonstrate that during the crisis engendered by the Euromaidan and the change of government in Kyiv, the language issue worried very few people (Giuliano, 2015b).³⁴ Another problem is that, since Ukrainian independence, the language issue has been politicised to such an extent that it is difficult to substantiate the idea that it was a major issue for many people.³⁵ Overall, it is

³⁴ Even local elites debated the relevance of this issue. In September 2002, Kharkiv governor Yevhen Kushnaryov, in a conversation with a Russian human rights lawyer Oleg Mironov, stated that “there is no language problem in Kharkiv”. See “Iazykovoï problemy v Khar’kove net – E. Kushnarev”, *Status Quo*, 16 September 2002. Following the introduction of the Language Law on 5 June 2012, Donetsk mayor Oleksandr Luk’yanchenko stated that there was no language problem in Donetsk. His response was echoed by the governor of Donetsk Andriy Shyshatskiy and his vice Andriy Fedoruk. See Vitaly Sizov, “Rukovodstvo Donetskoi Oblasti o polozhenii russkogo iazyka”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 8 June 2012.

³⁵ During his presidential campaign in 1994, Leonid Kuchma (1994 – 2004) made a pledge to make Russian the second state language, which brought ample political dividends in the form of votes in regions where Russian was most widely spoken, that is the east and south of Ukraine. The language issue was a gambit – or rather a useful PR ploy, as a number of analysts maintain – used by Viktor Yanukovych and his Party of Regions during the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2010 and 2012. Some journalists argued that the Kivalov-Kolesnichenko law of 2012 that gave Russian the status as an official language of the east and was repealed in February 2014 was a useful PR ploy promulgated to distract attention of the electorate from the more pressing issues, such as the state of the Ukrainian economy. One journalist writes: “we have to admit first and foremost that the language issue is raised primarily during election campaigns, when it receives the highest attention, gets thrown into the society by politicians, and is used by them in order to receive political dividends”. He pointed out that the people understood these political tactics very well: a poll conducted in June 2012 showed that most citizens (65,1%) thought of the then

exceedingly difficult to disentangle the Russian language issue from politics and demonstrate its paramount relevance to the people because it has always been used as a major rallying cry by some political parties in Ukraine.³⁶

In both regions, the Party of Regions dominated since its rise to the national prominence in 2002 (Katchanovski, 2010; Kuzio, 2015). In Donetsk, the Party of Regions' members took over the offices of mayor and deputies in the regional council by 2003 (Zimmer, K., 2007, 101). By 2004, almost all of the key regional actors belonged to the Party of Regions in the Donbas (Kovaleva, E., 2007, 76; Swain, A., and Mykhnenko, V. 2007). Throughout the 2000s, most Donbas residents staunchly voted for Viktor Yanukovich, the leader of the Party of Regions, who served as Prime Minister and then became President (Clem and Craumer, 2008; Colton, 2011; Copsey, 2008; Marples, D., 2015, 12 -13; Osipian, 2006; Petro, N., 2015; Romanova, 2013). During the 2010 presidential elections, Yanukovich won up to 90% of the region's votes (Zhukov, 2016, 3).

Similarly, Kharkiv city was considered as having played a key role in the ascendance of the Party of Regions, with the governor Yevhen Kushnaryov arguably being its most famous and most respected member before his death in January 2007.³⁷ The Party emerged as the dominant party in Kharkiv, with the key actors, such as the city council secretary and later mayor Hennadiy Kernes and the city mayor and later regional governor Mykhailo Dobkin, joining the Party from around 2006.

Table 3. Kharkiv regional council election results, March 2006 (number of seats)

Party of Regions	Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYUT)	Our Ukraine	Communist Party
83	21	12	12

draft bill of Kivalov-Kolesnichenko as a PR move. See Nikolay Mel'nik, "Zakon o iazyke: osnovy iazykovoi politiki ili zasada?", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 27 July 2012.

³⁶ Also, as Kuzio (2017) and various journalist accounts have demonstrated, many of the fighters on both the Ukrainian and pro-Russian side in the Donbas conflict spoke Russian and identified themselves as of mixed Russian and Ukrainian heritage. Kuzio (2017), for example, documents the participation of Russophones from Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk in the Ukrainian army fighting the separatists.

³⁷ "Regionaly" zaiavliaut o pobede vo vsekhn mazhoritarnykh okrugakh Khar'kovskoi oblasti," *LB.UA*, 29 October 2012.

Source: “Party Of Regions Initiating Vote Of No-Confidence In Kharkiv Region's Governor Avakov In Regional Council”, *Ukrainian News*, 29 May 2006.

Table 4. Kharkiv city council elections, March 2006

Party of Regions	Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYUT)	Volodymyr Shumilkin Bloc “For Kharkiv!”	Natalia Vitrenko Bloc “People’s Opposition”	Our Ukraine	Communist Party
54	14	8	8	6	5

Source: “Partijnye otsenki nashego vybora god spustia”, *Status Quo*, 26 March 2007.

The Party of Regions continued to benefit from the stable voting behaviour displayed by Kharkivites, and in 2010 it won 54% of votes in the regional and city council elections.³⁸ The city council was composed of 70 of the Party of Regions deputies and 13 deputies from Bat’kivshchina;³⁹ there were 9 deputies from other factions, such as Strong Ukraine and the Communist Party. By 2012, the Party of Regions consolidated its grip on power in the region, winning 35% of votes on party lists during the parliamentary elections. By contrast, Bat’kivshchina won 20% on party lists.⁴⁰

The political preferences of the residents in both regions were consistent and not dissimilar. Polls cited by scholars across the entire span of the 1990s and 2000s demonstrate broadly similar tendencies. In the 1990s, around half of the population to the east and south of the river Dnieper (including the Donbas) spoke in favourable terms about some form of political unity between Ukraine and Russia (Smith and Wilson, 1997, 855). Throughout the 1990s, a general pro-Russian orientation remained in both Donetsk and Kharkiv (Smith and Wilson, 1997; Timofeev and Wade, 1994; A. Wilson, 2014). Rodgers’ research conducted in 2006 in Kharkiv shows that many of his respondents (granted these were

³⁸ Anna Romanenko, “Mutnye vody “russkoi vesny””, *62.ua*, 23 March 2014; Oksana Ermolenko, “Khar’kovskii gorsovet: kto est’ kto v novom sostave deputatov”, *Segodnya*, 10 November 2010.

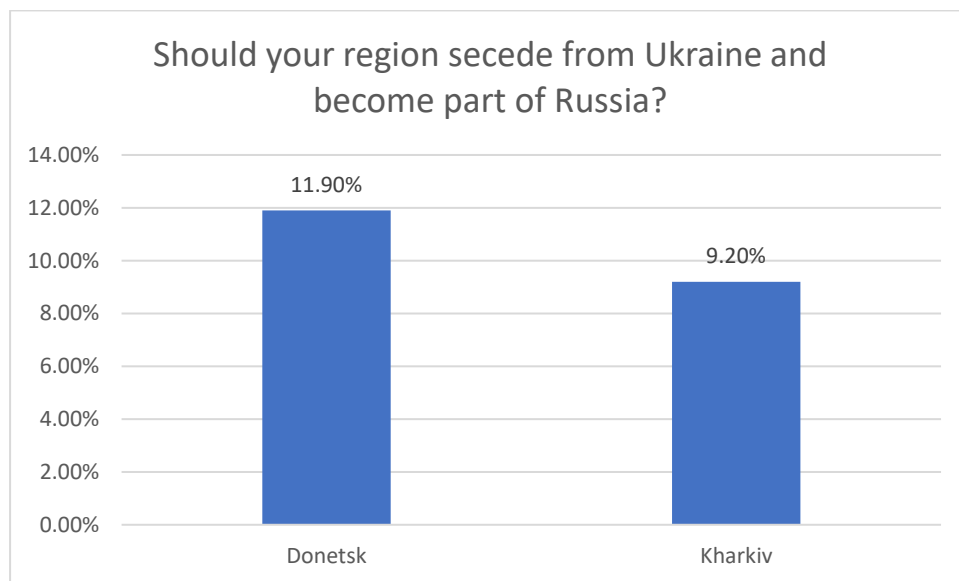
³⁹ “U kharkivskiyi miskiyi rady stvoreno riad fraktsij”, *Archived website of Kharkiv city*.

⁴⁰ Pavel Kogachenko, Lilia Angorskaia, “Mazhoritarshchiki-regionaly pobezhdauiut po vsem okrugam v Kharkove”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 28 October 2012.

children and teenagers in 2006) held some negative views about Western Ukraine. Also, “from the interviews with the older generation,” Rodgers writes, “emerged a dislike of efforts to “artificially” divide Ukraine and Russia” (Rodgers, 2006, 167).

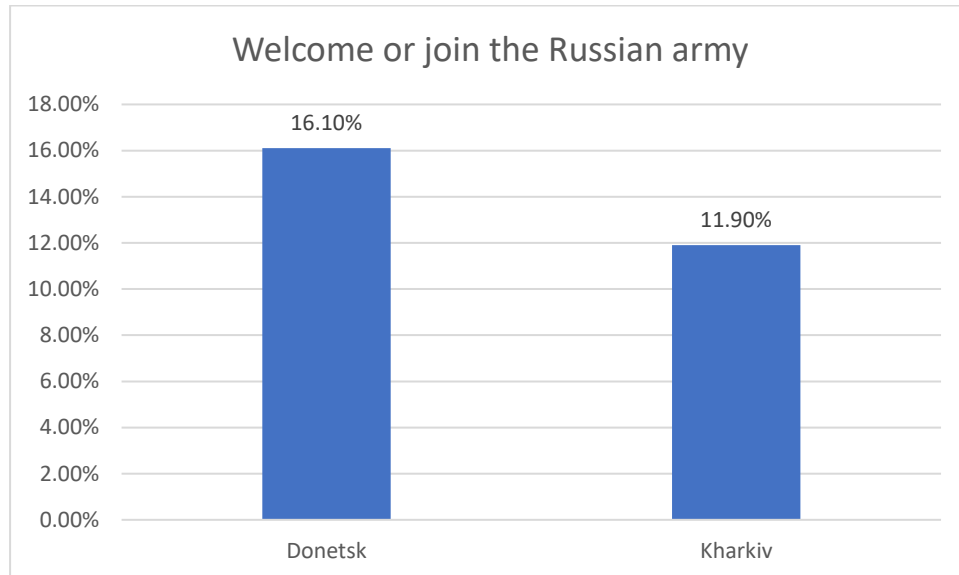
This orientation remained constant through to 2014. As Quentin Buckholz demonstrates, prior to 2014, the preferences of Kharkiv and Donetsk residents were not that dissimilar (Buckholz, 2019, 3). They were inclined towards Russia and the Customs Union and disliked what was going on the Maidan in Kyiv. According to the research on attitudes in Kharkiv conducted by Filippova and Giuliano, many Kharkivites opposed the Euromaidan strongly (Giuliano and Filippova, 2018). The most widely cited poll “Mneniia i vzgliady naseleniia yugo-vostoka Ukrainy: April 2014” (Views and opinions of the residents of the south-east of Ukraine) conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on 8-16 April 2014 presented the following breakdown of opinions:

Table 5. Should your region secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia? Percentage of positive responses.



Source: (Buckholz, 2019, 2).

Table 6. In the event of an invasion by Russian forces of south-eastern Ukraine, do you intend to welcome the entry of Russian forces or join the army of the Russian Federation? Percentage of positive responses.



Source: (ibid.: 3).

According to another poll conducted by the same institute in 2015, Kharkiv residents were quite accepting of the “Russian media narrative” concerning the annexation of Crimea and the Maidan uprising. 55% of Kharkiv respondents had a negative view of the Maidan uprising, while in Donetsk it was 63% (Buckholz, 2019, 3). As many in Kharkiv as in Donetsk favoured membership in the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) and as many were concerned about “the rupture of economic relations with Russia” (ibid. 5). In Kharkiv, according to the survey conducted by the group “Cooperation” from 2 to 14 of April 2014, most of the people wanted some questions of territorial integrity to be discussed at a referendum. 29% of Kharkivites were supporting Ukraine’s ascension to the EU, with 47% against, and 65% were against Ukraine joining NATO. By contrast, 37% of people wanted Ukraine to join the Customs Union.⁴¹ According to a 2016 interview with the former Kharkiv governor Ihor Baluta, in spring 2014, 8% of people in Kharkiv wanted Kharkiv to join Russia, while 25% wanted federalisation.

⁴¹ “Gennadiiu Kernesu doveriaiut bolee 70 protsentov khar’kovchan”, *Kharkovskie Izvestiia*, 24 April 2014.

Interestingly, according to the same survey conducted among the police in Kharkiv, 34% wanted Kharkiv to join Russia.⁴²

Both regions became home to pro-Russian organisations, which existed on the margins of Ukrainian politics but, nonetheless, held strong views. According to an article widely distributed on the Internet in 2014, there were 8 registered and 8 unregistered organisations of broadly Anti-Maidan orientation (these included pro-Russian and pro-federal organisations) in Kharkiv, such as Velikaya Rus' (Great Rus'), Rus' Triedinaia (Three-Some Rus'), Yuriy Apukhtin's Grazhdanskiy Forum (Civic Forum) and others (confirmed in interviews with the protest organisers in Kharkiv). The same article lists 10 registered and 7 unregistered organisations espousing similar, but mostly pro-Russian views, in Donetsk in 2014.⁴³ In March 2014, one of the leaders of the pro-federal resistance in Kharkiv, Yuriy Apukhtin, reported to have united over 40 organisations in a movement dubbed "South East".⁴⁴ In the same month, Ihor Massalov, a deputy of Kharkiv regional council supporting Anti-Maidan, said that the pro-federal movement united more than 100 organisations.⁴⁵

A pro-Russian activist Serhiy Buntovskiy charts the development of pro-Russian activism in the Donbas from the onset of Ukrainian independence and lists roughly 8 organisations with pro-Russian orientation (Buntovskiy, 2016, 14). Many of them entertained the ideas of federalisation of Ukraine in the 1990s. These pro-Russian organisations, according to Buntovskiy, were generally more popular, more numerous, and advanced more radical ideas in the 1990s (Buntovskiy, 2016, 12 - 13). Smith and Wilson identify such pro-Russian political parties as Civic Congress, which, however, had very little success in local elections (Smith and Wilson, 1997, 849). Pirie identifies the Inter-movement of the Donbas, Civic Congress, Congress of Russian Communities, and the Party of Slavic Unity as pro-Russian organisations (Pirie, 1998, 228), with their own niche support, active in the 1990s. Litvinenko lists at least three pro-Russian organisations active in Donetsk since 2004, including the Russian Bloc (Litvinenko, 2004), which

⁴² "Eks-gubernator Khar'kovshchiny Igor Baluta: "Dlia menia reshaiushchim stalo 22 Aprelia – likvidatsiia separatistskogo gorodki vozle pamiatnika Leninu", *Censor.net.ua*, 7 April 2016.

⁴³ "Separatistskie organizatsii na Vostoke Ukrainy (spisok, infografika)", 4 November 2014, https://old.flot2017.com/posts/new/separatistskie_organizacii_na_vostoke_ukrainy_spisok_infografika; <http://archive.is/wQDCg>.

⁴⁴ "V Kharkove zaiavili o namerenii stvoriiti Iugo-vostochnuiu respubliku", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 30 March 2014.

⁴⁵ "V Kharkove provedut narodnyii veche-referendum", *Nahnews.org*, 12 March 2014.

participated in the protests in spring 2014, and the “Slavic Party”. These organisations had similar strategic aims, such as to give the Russian language the status of state language, integrate Ukraine into a union with Russia and Belarus, and resist anything they considered “Western” or “Galician” (Litvinenko, 2004).

Litvinenko writes that pro-Russian parties and organisations remained marginally popular in Ukraine.⁴⁶ At the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Russian Bloc party won 0.73% of the votes nationally. In Donetsk, they won 0.51% and in Kharkiv 0.77% (Litvinenko, 2004). In 2012, the Russian Bloc won only 0.4% of the votes in Donetsk (A. Wilson, 2014, 123). As Litvinenko writes, “The character of the relations between Ukraine and Russia ... do not allow these parties to promote their typical slogans, such as a “disjointed cultural space”, “disunited people” etc. It leads these parties to create problems where such problems do not exist, so that they can divert the attention of voters to themselves” (ibid.). Litvinenko, Fournier and Pirie argue that these “Russians” lacked political identity and clearly articulated demands throughout the 1990s. Pirie’s detailed research into these organisations characterised their identity as “marginal,” that is weakly identifying with both Ukrainians and Russians. Smith and Wilson write that, for a good part of the 1990s, these organisations did not have enough resources to mobilise effectively in Donetsk (Smith and Wilson, 1997, 861). Such factors force us to consider the behaviour of these organisations in 2014 in more detail and look for a combined effect of the local political elites’ and these organisations’ behaviours.

Finally, to reinforce the relevance of Kharkiv case even further, from 2014, Kharkiv was recognised as a “strategic region” in Ukraine, in that a strategic significance was attributed to the fact that it shared the border with Russia and, later, 300km with the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhans’k.⁴⁷ In spring 2014, a military and political analyst Dmytro Tymchuk assigned Kharkiv to the third place after Donetsk and Luhans’k respectively on the “Extremism Threat” scale.⁴⁸ As late as 2015, the

⁴⁶ Civil war research generally focuses on self-determination movements that develop over a long-time and pursue their self-determination aims through legitimate means, such as lobbying and participation in elections (Sambanis and Zinn, 2003; Sambanis and Zinn, 2006) . These movements are well-organised, with well-articulated aims and act on behalf of populations with highly developed national consciousness.

⁴⁷ “Glava AP: V Khar’kove sohraniaetsia ugroza destabilizatsii situatsii”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 12 October 2016.

⁴⁸ Dmitry Tymchuk, “Dmytro Tymchuk’s military blog: rating the extremist threat in Ukraine’s oblasts”, *Kyiv Post*, 23 April 2014.

head of the regional administration Ihor Rainin claimed that the region risked becoming destabilised due to the Russian propaganda and migration from Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic.⁴⁹ There were several violent attacks in Kharkiv at that time, such as on 22 February 2015, during the march for united Ukraine.⁵⁰ These were quickly labelled "terrorist attacks";⁵¹ the regional authorities were adamant that these attacks were levelled by local Ukrainians trained in Belgorod and Rostov under the guidance of the Russian secret services.⁵² As late as March 2015, it was claimed that the Russian propaganda beyond Donetsk and Luhansk had its greatest impact in Kharkiv and Odesa: the same old tropes were recited, such as the fear that the Kyiv government threatened Russian speakers of these two regions.⁵³ Despite this, Kharkiv's top elites held highly ambivalent attitudes towards Russia. As late as March 2015, for example, the deputies of Kharkiv regional council did not even want to put the question of recognising Russia as "the aggressor country" on the agenda at one of the council sessions.⁵⁴ Similarly, Kharkiv mayor Hennadiy Kernes staunchly opposed raising this debate in the city council. The council recognised Russia as the "aggressor country" only in July that year, presumably after being put under pressure by the regional administration (Activist in Kharkiv, Interview 16 07 2019).⁵⁵

To summarise this section, the most recent findings within the history and identity approach point to the fact that ethnicity does not easily map into political attitudes and action, while people can be motivated by local rather than geopolitical concerns; in addition, separatism was not a mass phenomenon in the Donbas, while it became more prevalent as macro-processes of escalation to war (after the ATO began) were underway. Additionally, as I have demonstrated through historical, ethnographic, and political comparison of the two regions, both regions can be prone to similar levels of protest and protest violence, if their "emotional worldviews" that emerge from their shared historical and ethnolinguistic experiences are disturbed by significant external events. Therefore, if we were to focus on the history of the regions and their pro-Russian proclivities as explanatory variables, we would not receive adequate

⁴⁹ "Khar'kovskii gubernator: risk destabilizatsii est', no podderzhki u separatistov vse men'she", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 7 April 2015.

⁵⁰ "Vnaslidok teraktu u Kharkovi dvoe zahyblykh ta 11 poranenykh – ODA", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 22 February 2015.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "Khar'kovskii gubernator: risk destabilizatsii est', no podderzhki u separatistov vse men'she", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 7 April 2015.

⁵³ "Sotsiologi b'yut trevogu: rossiiskaia propaganda atakuie Khar'kov i Odessu", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 25 March 2015.

⁵⁴ "Khar'kovskii obshovet ne schitaet Rossiyyu agressorom", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 5 March 2015.

⁵⁵ "Khar'kovskii gorsoviet taki priznal Rossiyyu agressorom", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 10 July 2015.

answers as to why one region became a site of a violent conflict and the other witnessed a peaceful outcome. The outcomes were by no means certain due to the extent of protest violence and systematic protest activities in both regions.

4. The role of foreign actors

The debate about the transnational dimension of the Donbas conflict and the role of Russia in it is based on a broader theoretical literature on the role of other states in internal conflicts. Firstly, empirical research on what appear to be internal conflicts demonstrates that “third parties,” usually neighbouring states, often get involved in these conflicts, affecting their escalation and settlement (Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2004; Gleditsch, 2007; Harbom and Wallensteen, 2005; Rauta, 2016; Regan, 2002; Walter, 1997). States provide overt and covert support to both rebel groups and governments, with covert support being offered more often (Harbom and Wallensteen, 2005). Secondly, it is argued that geographical proximity of states and the presence of transnational ethnic kin make one state more likely to intervene in and escalate internal disputes in other states (Gleditsch, 2007). As Gleditsch writes, “the risk of civil war is not determined just by a country’s internal or domestic characteristics, but differs fundamentally, depending on a country’s linkages to other states” (Gleditsch, 2007, 293). The research by Salehyan analysing various civil conflicts lends further support to the view that we should consider internal conflicts in their international rather than purely domestic context. In particular, he demonstrates the importance of diasporas in supporting rebels (Salehyan, 2006). Thirdly, it is assumed that states would intervene when their ethnic kin is threatened in the neighbouring state. Gleditsch (2007: 297) cites research that shows that “external interventions in conflicts often seem motivated by efforts to support ethnic kin in other states” (Saideman, 2001). Therefore, several general assumptions are made in this literature: states are the key actors in the process of conflict (Harbom and Wallensteen 2005, 628); states do get involved in internal disputes of other states; geographical proximity and the presence of an ethnic kin make another state’s intervention in conflict more likely; in some cases, states intervene when their ethnic kin is threatened. In other words, we should observe similar dynamics of covert or overt intervention in geographically proximate countries - or regions – and those in which particular ethnic kin straddles borders.

Another set of theories within the literature on transnational dimensions of internal conflicts revolves around the interaction between the rebel group in the conflict state and the state populated by the group's ethnic kin. It is argued that the rebel group is likely to radicalise and "militarise" when it has palpable external support from the ethnic kin state. According to Erin Jenne's theory (Jenne, 2007) (built around the concept of the "triadic nexus" first theorised by Roger Brubaker (Brubaker, 1994; Brubaker, 1996)), the presence of an external actor that leverages the ethnic minority engaged in challenging the central government complicates the government's bargaining with that group. This can lead to conflict. Following from her analysis of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia in the interwar period and other cases, she concludes that "group radicalization is driven by shifting perceptions of relative power against the center. These perceptions are informed both by changes in the institutional opportunity structure and by the actions of the group's external patron (if one exists)" (Jenne, 2007, 43). In other words, if the minority is sufficiently leveraged by its external patron, it is likely to radicalise its demands, even when the host state is willing to accommodate it. Jenne's model is built around perceptions of the balance of power and signalling: it predicts that "when the minority's external patron credibly signals interventionist intent, minority leaders are likely to radicalize their demands against the center" (Jenne, 2007, 2).

In a similar vein, David Laitin (Laitin, 2001) proposes the "commitment theory," which posits that for ethnic violence to break out, two conditions must be present. Firstly, "the leading elites in the national homeland ... make credible commitments to the minority population that they will pay extraordinary costs to support their compatriots in post-independence conflicts" (853). The "national homeland" is where the minorities in the host or conflict state have historically come from. Secondly, the homeland must make "an offer" to these minorities, which must be of a much higher quality than the offer made by the host state. Laitin does not specify what kind of offer this is, but it can be an offer of economic and political nature, and it is linked to the homeland's "attractiveness" for the minorities. That is, the homeland must show that if the minorities decide to rebel against their host state and will want to become part of the homeland, the homeland will offer much better economic and social "packages" to these minorities than those being offered by the host state. Conversely, if the homeland is "uncommitted" and fails to produce any offers to the minorities, ethnic violence is unlikely to break out and the host state will be stable. Thus, the major assumption made in this literature is that the rebel group would radicalise

when the external patron sends credible signals to it. Based on this review of the literature, I formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: political opportunities for protest that leads to war are created externally by ethnic patrons

Some of these insights have been applied to the study of the Donbas conflict. In fact, one of the major views on the Donbas conflict, strongly supported and promoted by the Ukrainian government and media, is that the conflict has been “manufactured in Moscow”. In some scholarly accounts espousing this view, agency is largely denied to the local Ukrainians. Instead, many analysts focus on the role of Russians as individuals and Russia as a state (this distinction is important) in causing the conflict (Czuperski et al., 2015; Mitrokhin, 2014; Sutyagin, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). In these accounts, Russia as a state assumes a role that is described in the theoretical literature cited above: a state that is concerned with the fate of its ethnic kin in the neighbouring state Ukraine, and is therefore extremely likely to get involved in what seems to be a local conflict. Wilson (2014) (2016) depicts the conflict as lacking popular backing in the region and being organised and fomented by Russia almost single-handedly, with the help of the Ukrainian elites who moved to Russia for fear of political persecution. The absence of prior ethnic strife in the region makes these researchers look beyond the local factors that played out in the Donbas insurgency and argue that it was primarily Russian involvement that aggravated the insurgency and turned it into a full-fledged war. Wilson, for example, argues that the protests and demonstrations in the Donbas were “smouldering away” already in March and April 2014, and, if it wasn’t for the Russians involved, they would have eventually tapered off and a peaceful settlement would have been made (Wilson, 2016, 633).

Nikolay Mitrokhin divides the conflict into three phases, with the first two being propelled by the “Russians”. In Mitrokhin’s account, “Russians” are pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. They are represented by various individuals with either Russian roots or connection to Russia through military service or family. They also include nationalists from Russia (Mitrokhin, 2014). Mitrokhin argues that it is this “military wing” that quickly supersedes the “political wing” of the pro-Russian protest in the Donets’k region and initiates the conflict (221). Mitrokhin’s account is subtle and compelling, yet it does not account for why and how the “military wing” gained the upper hand over the “political wing,” and

who opened political opportunities for the pro-Russian activists in Donetsk region in the first place. It is also notable that the external signals from the ethnic patron Russia were sent to all the regions of the south-east (see Putin's press conference on Ukraine on 4 March 2014)⁵⁶ (Activist in Kharkiv, Interview, 16 07 2019).

The last phase of the conflict, in Mitrokhin's account, begins in August 2014, and is propelled by the regular Russian troops. In his detailed report on this phase, Igor Sutyagin writes: "The first phase of large-scale incursions by regular Russian troops commenced on 11 August 2014 and has involved a substantial array of forces" (Sutyagin, 2015, 1). Sutyagin dates the presence of the Russian spetsnaz groups in Donetsk region since 14 July at the latest, yet the vast majority of detail he provides comes between mid-August 2014 and February 2015. Similarly, the Bellingcat report's claim that "Kremlin-directed Russian military personnel, intelligence operatives, and public relations consultants began to organize a so-called separatist movement to oppose the Ukrainian government by force" (Czuperski et al., 2015, i) is not borne out by data, as the report focuses overwhelmingly on the events after 11 May referendum on Donetsk People's Republic's independence.

While the evidence that Russian non-state actors helped the insurgency to get off the ground is quite compelling (German and Karagiannis, 2016; Kashin, 2014; Matveeva, 2018; Mitrokhin, 2014), since 2016, more evidence has appeared confirming that Russia *as a state* did not cause the war. Paul Robinson (2016, 507) argues that Russia has been reacting to the events rather than masterminding them. Moreover, Russian nationalists have been blaming Russia for inaction in relation to the Donbas (Robinson, 2016, 507). Strelkov and others regularly complained that they did not receive enough support from Russia (Sakwa, 2015, 156). As Robinson writes on Strelkov, "despite allegations that he was acting on behalf of the Russian intelligence services, Strelkov himself claims that he came to Ukraine in response to an appeal from Donbass activists. According to Strelkov, the Russian intelligence services may have been aware of his plans and did nothing to stop him, but he did not carry his actions out under their instructions (Prokhanov & Strelkov, 2014)" (Robinson, 2016, 511). This quote highlights two important points: firstly, Strelkov acted in response to an appeal from the Donbas' activists and secondly, these activists had an

⁵⁶ "Pres-konferentsiia Vladimira Putina po Ukraine", *YouTube*, 4 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwspevY5kvg>.

opportunity to appeal to him. These points will be discussed further. Robinson's and Davies' analyses of the Russian response to the Donbas insurgency point to the complexity of the Russian strategy in the Donbas. Davies attributes this complexity to the divisions within the Russian elite (Davies, 2016).

Therefore, we cannot attribute the responsibility for the war to the Russian state. Sakwa argues that "Russia may well have stirred the pot at the beginning, and thereafter held regular consultations with the resistance leaders, but the scale of its initial materiel support was greatly exaggerated by the Kyiv government and its Western supporters" (Sakwa, 2015, 156). He further writes: "what is incontrovertible is that two elements developed in parallel: a genuine regional revolt adopting the tactics of the Maidan against the "Ukrainising" and anti-Russian policies pursued by the Kyiv authorities, and the strategic political considerations of Moscow, which exploited the insurgency to exercise leverage against Kyiv government to achieve defined goals" (Sakwa, 2015, 156). So, for Sakwa, the primary cause lies with the locals. Similarly, Kudelia contends that Russia "did not act in a vacuum," but rather exploited the local conflict (Kudelia, 2016, 5). The recent evidence on the role of Russia in the conflict confirms that Russian state actors, such as Putin's aide Vladislav Surkov, stepped into the insurgency later⁵⁷ and were not welcome by some insurgents, such as the leader of "Vostok" battalion Aleksandr Khodakovskiy.⁵⁸

There is also the time factor, that is the sequence of the events, which leads one to discredit Russia's responsibility in stirring the insurgency from the beginning. It forces us to take the agency of the local Ukrainians into account. The Anti-Maidan demonstrations and protests were held in various cities of Ukraine almost simultaneously with the Euromaidan protest, that is from November 2013 to February 2014. The clashes between the Euromaidan supporters and Anti-Maidan forces took place from the beginning of the Euromaidan, before the Russian annexation of Crimea. The first "self-defence" units to protect local people from "neo-Nazi" threats began forming throughout the east and south and especially the Crimean Peninsula from December 2013. These were local People's Councils and self-defence units that took on themselves the functions of law-enforcement agencies in the absence of a viable police force

⁵⁷ Anton Zverev, "Ex-rebel leaders detail role played by Putin aide in east Ukraine", *Reuters*, 11 May 2017.

⁵⁸ Aleksandr Khodakovskiy, *Vkontakte*, 10 December 2018, https://vk.com/id410606173?w=wall410606173_48405; <http://archive.is/rLOmq>.

(Kudelia, 2014a). This means that the political opportunity for these Anti-Maidan forces was coming not from Russia but from elsewhere.

Finally, from my interviews conducted with Kharkiv's pro-federal activists, it emerges that all of them sought help from Russia, yet they failed to receive it (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018; Protest Organiser 1 interview 24 09 2018; (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014; Yudaev, 2015) . In Donetsk, for a long time, there was a situation of great uncertainty as to whether Russia would indeed help the insurgents and intervene (Prokhanov and Strelkov, 2014) (Activist from Donetsk Interview 27 07 2019). Yet, the pro-Russian contention in Donetsk was radical from the start (Protest Organiser 1 in Kharkiv Interview 24 09 2018). This empirical reality contradicts the propositions in the literature on external patrons, credible signals, and radicalisation in response to the signals from the external actors.

5. Why local elites?

In the previous sections, I have established that in the case of the Donbas conflict the role of the people, their identities and emotions in generating the conflict is uncertain, while structurally similar regions can experience similar protest dynamics and, therefore, both be susceptible to conflict. I have also argued that empirically, political opportunities for protest and foreign actors' intervention are created internally. In this way, I questioned the viability of the argument that attributes primary responsibility for conflict to external actors. This is because from late 2013 to spring 2014, eastern Ukraine already experienced a significant level of the Anti-Maidan, pro-federal, and pro-Russian protest activity. In both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region, political opportunities for these types of political protest were created largely by the local elites. This was particularly pronounced in Kharkiv. The local elites in Kharkiv were vehemently against the Euromaidan, as this protest was not in their interest and threatened to unseat them. The Euromaidan protest stood in the long line of political protests organised by opposition parties and ordinary people that the local Party of Regions' elites confronted over the previous decade. There is some indirect evidence that these elites sponsored or were connected to the Anti-Maidan forces. The creation of the Ukrainian Front on 1 February 2014 to counter the Euromaidan and the Congress of the Deputies of All Levels on 22 February, both organised by Kharkiv top elites, signalled to the Anti-Maidan and pro-federal activists in Kharkiv that the elites were on their side. In response to these opening

political opportunities, on 23 February, the pro-federal activists began gathering on Lenin Square (Protest Organiser 1 interview 24 09 2018; Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018). Similarly, the Euromaidan protest in Donetsk region was not in the local elites' interest. They responded to it by endorsing some Anti-Maidan protestors and creating political opportunities for pro-Russian contention and mobilisation of spontaneous armed groups. *Therefore, prior to the "Russian Spring", the initial conditions in the two regions were similar: political opportunities for pro-federal and pro-Russian contention were opened by the local elites.*

When the governing network changed in Kyiv in February 2014, the local elites took different stances towards that change, and this shaped their attitudes towards the local political protest. The period of the "Russian Spring" was characterised by the interaction between the elites and activists and the activists' attempts to mobilise resources in response to the opening and closing political opportunities. At the same time, the "Russian Spring" cannot be described as "elite-managed" (Robertson, 2011, 4) in that the "Russian Spring" protests and meetings were not organised and led by the local elites, except in a few cases. Graeme Robertson's characterisation of protest activity in Russia in late 1990s – early 2000s corresponds to the empirical reality in Ukraine in spring 2014: "in most cases, influence over protest levels was indirect, less a matter of directly organizing protests, so much as one of deciding when to permit them and when to prevent them" (Robertson, 2011, 78).

Not only is the importance of local elites for protest outcomes described in retrospective activist testimony⁵⁹ and interviews with protest organisers (Journalist 1, Interview, 19 07 2019; Protest Organiser 1 Interview 24 09 2018). In broad terms, local elites are the most immediate state actors with whom activists come in contact (Journalist 1, Interview 19 07 2019). In concrete ways, local elites create or close political opportunity for protest by allowing protestors to gather or banning protest through the local courts; by influencing protest action directly and personally; by endorsing or denouncing activists; and by refusing or agreeing to act on the key demands put forward by the activists. In highly clientelistic societies, protest activity that is considered to be congruent with the local elites' interests can be financed in "indirect and concealed fashion" (Kitschelt, H., and Wilkinson, S. 2007, 19). Thus, the elites can provide certification and legitimation to the kinds of protests that are in their interest, while directly or

⁵⁹ https://vk.com/donbass_res?w=wall-3223620_1486410; <http://archive.is/tTGa2>.

indirectly targeting protest that is not in their interest. So we can distinguish between the types of protest that are in the local elites' interest and those that are not in their interest.

In their turn, the activists recognise that local elites are the intermediaries or mediators between themselves and the centre: they therefore make claims on local elites. For example, the activists may appeal to local elites to direct their political proposals to the central government or to challenge the central government. This is consistent with the empirical reality in Ukraine in spring 2014 when pro-federalisation and pro-Russian activists made numerous and consistent claims on the local elites, demanding them to proclaim the central government as illegitimate, to disobey its orders, and to conduct a "federalisation referendum".

In this interactive process, local elites send signals to external actors who are planning an intervention with the view of launching an insurgency. Holding constant the regions' geographical proximity to the ethnic patron, the presence of the ethnic kin, or other structural conditions, as well as the regional protest dynamics, external actors' calculations as to the success of the intervention are dependent on the local elites' behaviour and the relative openness of political opportunities for radical protest.

In this section, I build the theory of why the local elites open political opportunities for specific types of protest and why in some regions opportunities remain open and in others they are gradually closed.⁶⁰ Before I proceed with the theory building, I review the most recent literature on the role of the local elites in the Donbas conflict and position it within the larger literature on the role of elites in conflicts.

5.1. Elites in the Donbas conflict

Andrew Wilson (2016), Andriy Portnov (2016) and Quentin Buckholz (2019) first drew attention to the role of the local elites in the Donbas conflict.⁶¹ Wilson (2016, 631) writes that the history and identity approach does not provide a wholly adequate explanation of the conflict's origins: "historical and identity factors, economic fears and alienation from the new government in Kyiv were only part of the

⁶⁰ See (Brockett, 2005) on central America for variations in the openness and closure of political opportunities.

⁶¹ Matsuzato (2017) and (Matsuzato, 2018) further elaborated on the ambiguous role of the local elites in the Russian Spring in the Donbas.

reason for the rise of the separatist movement in the Donbas, Ukraine, in the spring of 2014. They set a baseline, but one not high enough to account for the creation of two mini-‘Republics’ and a prolonged war, without considering the effect of Russian sponsorship and the role of local elites, mainly from the literal and metaphorical ‘Family’ of former President Viktor Yanukovych”. In Wilson’s account the elites, such as Yanukovych’s son Oleksandr and various oligarchs, such as Viktor Nusenkis and Oleksandr Yefremov (in Luhans’k), provided material support, channelled through their enterprises, to the separatists (645). During the Euromaidan phase of political protest, they hired the so-called *titushki* (groups of young men) to disperse the Euromaidan protestors, so as to keep the south-eastern regions under control. During the “Russian Spring” phase of political protest, they secured key appointments in the law enforcement sector for their supporters, thus channelling the pro-Russian protest in their desired direction (645). More specifically, the “intentionally” paralysed police force in Donetsk region made the local people’s participation in the pro-Russian protests and eventual insurgency less costly. Finally, the elites manipulated the “baseline factors” to their own advantage (646), although Wilson’s evidence is less clear for this argument, and it is not clear how this manipulation worked. All of these factors, including the Russian support, helped the largely unpopular separatist insurgency get off the ground and become a “mass phenomenon,” as Wilson contends (644).

Certain empirical gaps have emerged in this approach to the Donbas conflict. For example, the media articles that Wilson cites when he argues that the elites provided financial support to the separatists were published in late 2014- early 2015. These articles do not cite evidence of this support in the early 2014.⁶² The question arises whether these elites became active in their support of the separatists before or after the conflict began. According to my interview with Journalist 1, the leaders of the nascent DNR vowed to “shoot” any local elites if they participated in the local elections (19 07 2019). Kudelia (Kudelia, 2014a) similarly argues that when it comes to the elites, there is no conclusive evidence that the local oligarchs supported the insurgency financially. Neither has it been clear whether the elites organised the insurgency. Some scholars, like Anna Matveeva (2016), call the Donbas insurgency a “leaderless” one: most elites, particularly those with strong pro-Ukrainian views, fled the region and left the local people

⁶² “Yanukovych i Nusenkis finansuiut’ dial’nist’ ohrupyvannia DNR—ZMI”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 18 June 2015; “Pechers’kyi sud zniav aresht iz rakhunkiv Arbuzova—ZMI”, *Tyzhden.ua*, 29 November 2014.

“to fend for themselves” (Matveeva, 2016, 37). As Matveeva shows, the social background of the insurgents, with most being “local men, poorly educated and often unruly, with a background in private security, skilled labour, small business; and low-level administrators” points to the absence of a professional middle class which could have led the insurgency (Matveeva, 2016, 36).

The role of the richest oligarch in the Donbas and Ukraine, Rinat Akhmetov, is also not entirely clear. During both the Euromaidan and the Russian Spring phase, Akhmetov kept his political stance largely to himself and issued a few conciliatory statements towards the beginning of May 2014.⁶³ Journalists maintained that Akhmetov’s principle was “having balance and being further away from both conflicting sides”.⁶⁴ On the other hand, due to the far-reaching ends of his sprawling commercial empire and control over the local security forces,⁶⁵ Akhmetov was perceived as a key actor in the region, and there was an ever-present expectation that he would come out strongly against separatism (Activist from Donetsk Interview 27 07 2019).⁶⁶ Denys Kazanskiy argues that, if Akhmetov sought to use the insurgency for a bargaining purpose, he quickly lost control of it (Kazanskiy, 2014) (Personal communication with an academic 10 03 2017) (Matveeva, 2016).⁶⁷ According to my interview with Journalist 1, it took Akhmetov and his advisors too long to assess the situation in Donetsk properly and make the right decisions (Interview 19 07 2019).

According to my interviews with Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2, the Anti-Maidan and pro-federal protest organisers in Kharkiv, the logic of the argument that the local elites in Donetsk, including Akhmetov, were responsible for the conflict is “iron” (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018), despite the fact that it is hard to find concrete data on the financing of separatism by these elites.

⁶³ Yevhen Shybalov, “Zapiznile prozrinnia Akhmetova”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 22 May 2014; “Rinat Akhmetov pryzvaet vlast’ ne nakaliat’ situatsiiu na yugo-vostoke Ukrainy”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 March 2014.

⁶⁴ “Separatyzm v Ukraini: khto kontroliuie prorosijs’ki syly v Donetsk’ku”, *Deutsche Welle*, 11 April 2014.

⁶⁵ “Rinat Akhmetov otobral Donbass u Ukrainy”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 19 April 2014.

⁶⁶ “Ukrainian richest businessman's stance on events in Donetsk region examined”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 19 March 2014.

⁶⁷ Also, many pro-Russian activists, such as notably Pavel Gubarev, harboured strong anti-elite sentiments and fought hard against being co-opted into elite-organised demonstrations (Which is corroborated in one of the sources cited by Wilson (2016) <http://m-kalashnikov.livejournal.com/2391622.html>; <http://archive.is/ZQWbs>). Other separatist activists and fighters, such as Aleksey Mozgovoi in the LNR and those of the Donetsk Republic movement were equally opposed to the Party of Regions and the oligarchs. This is evident, for example, in the interviews by Vyacheslav Ponomarev, the former “people’s mayor” of Sloviansk (Ponomarev, 2014) and in Gubarev’s memoir (Gubarev, 2016). The early rhetoric of the “Russian Spring” was in many ways built around the liberation struggle, that is the liberation from both the oligarchs and the local political elites.

Protest Organiser 1 is convinced that the pro-Russian protest in Donetsk was taken over by the “oligarchic structures” from early March. To him, the insurgents’ spokesman Denis Pushilin was a man beholden to these oligarchic structures (Interview 24 09 2018). Further, the oligarchs planned to manipulate the protest to bargain with Kyiv, until enough privileges, such as decentralisation or even federalisation, were extracted from the centre. This bargaining could have continued and spawned a centre-region conflict. Then the insurgency would have died a natural death, had it not been for the appearance of Strelkov, a foreign agent, who disrupted the local elites’ bargaining plans, Protest Organiser 1 maintains.

The difference between the trajectories of Kharkiv and Donetsk, intuited by journalists and discussed in some academic literature (Buckholz, 2019), has been attributed to the difference in the stances taken by the regional elites towards the pro-federal and pro-Russian protest. Journalists and scholars widely cite the example of Dnipropetrovsk (now Dnipro), where the powerful local oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky nipped the protest in the bud. According to my interview with Activist from Donetsk, Kolomoisky also promised security to the Berkut officers: “He gathered them all together and said “This is my Berkut”,” therefore making their participation in pro-Russian protests and eventual insurgency more costly (Interview 27 07 2019). Following a very brief hiatus, in Kharkiv, the local elites took a strongly pro-Ukrainian stance after the change of government in Kyiv and did not allow the pro-federal protest to develop into a conflict (Buckholz, 2019). In Donetsk, on the other hand, the local elites supported the aims of the pro-Russian protest and even endorsed some of the most radical activists early on.

The largely circumstantial data offered by the scholars on the role of the local elites in the conflict and the conviction of the Anti-Maidan protestors that these elites had an interest in manipulating the protest, especially in Donetsk, point in one direction: we must demonstrate the relevance of the local elites’ behaviour for the protest outcomes and we must explain why the local elites took different stances towards the change in the centre and the local protest. This requires a more systematic approach to the study of the local elites in Ukraine. If the role of the people in the Donbas conflict is so uncertain, as demonstrated in the sociological research by Giuliano (2018) and others, we should look at the interaction between the local elites and activists and how this led to the outcomes of interest.

5.2. Elites in civil war research

The approaches focusing on the role of elites in internal conflicts can broadly be described as “instrumental” (de Figueiredo, M., and Weingast, B. 1999; Gagnon, 1994; Jones, B.,1999; Woodward, S.,1999). Wilkinson succinctly summarises the main argument advanced in this literature: “ethnic violence has often been portrayed as the outcome of a rational ... strategy used by political elites to win and hold power” (Wilkinson, 2004). This is echoed in Petersen (2011, 6): “violence is often viewed as a matter of very small numbers of actors, either elites or criminals, making rational decisions to initiate and sustain violence to achieve narrow ends”. In his work on the civil wars in Transdnistria and Yugoslavia, Stuart Kaufman documents the role of national elites in instigating violence (Kaufman, 1996; Kaufman, 2001). He argues that civil war violence was initiated by the national leaders to serve their own interest and also because they wanted to “distract attention from their own past sins and their countries’ present economic and social problems” (Wilkinson, 2004, 2). In Souleimanov’s account of post-Soviet wars in the Caucasus, ethnicity per se does not cause an ethnic war; rather, ethnic rifts are exploited by the elites who react to new nation-wide political opportunities, such as the liberalisation of the ruling regime, the change of government or the weakness of the centre (Souleimanov, 2013). Souleimanov demonstrates that the nationalist elites exploited the situation of extreme uncertainty and the central government’s weakness in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Souleimanov, 2013). It was they who transformed sporadic conflicts into large-scale ones. “Established large-scale violence,” he writes (Souleimanov, 2013, 49), “is a product of a conscious decision of an actor or actors to turn to conflict”. Therefore, instead of being the causes of these wars, the narratives associated with “ancient hatreds” are constructs invoked and manipulated by the elites to increase the level of social mobilisation along ethnic lines.

The national elites, therefore, emerge as exploiters of the population’s fears and anxieties in the rationalist pursuit of power. In Kaufman’s account, ethnicity and the fears and anxieties associated with it provide a foundation for the leaders of mass-led protests. Leaders manipulate one ethnic group’s negative stereotypes about the other. They do so in order to achieve or maintain power. In Kaufman’s account (1996), these elites compete with – or “outbid” – each other in promoting increasingly more extreme nationalist discourse, which leads to conflict. National elites can also exploit the so-called security dilemma, that is, a situation, in which one ethnic group starts arming itself in response to the other ethnic

group's threatening behaviour (Posen, 1993). Posen argues that this was the case in the Serbo-Croatian war (1991 – 1995). According to Kalyvas, this argument “usually implies two distinct motivations: elites act instrumentally in pursuit of power, while the followers act emotionally, out of fear” (Kalyvas, 2006, 61).

This “instrumentalist” approach to the role of elites has been applied to contemporary conflicts. As Chris Wilson writes on Indonesia, “collective violence appears incited by powerful individuals, seemingly in the pursuit of their own political or economic interests” (C. Wilson, 2011, 2). Similarly, Azmeh writes on the conflict in Syria: “the multisectarian ruling elite’s decision to activate this vanguard role by invoking historical discrimination (the return of a Sunni-dominated state) and by raising fears of revenge for use of excessive force, drove the descent of a protest movement into a sectarian conflict. This decision not only has led to the ongoing disaster in Syria but will also make maintaining the unity of the country and normal relations between different groups extremely challenging in the future” (Azmeh, 2016, 520).

Wilkinson (2004, 3) argues that the problem with this literature is that it focuses disproportionately on national leaders at the expense of local or regional elites.⁶⁸ He also points out that too often the scholars adopting this approach look at cases where politicians incited violence and ignore those cases where they prevented it (ibid.,2). By looking at town-level statistics on Hindu-Muslim riots in India, Wilkinson documents the role of regional elites and their electoral incentives in instigating or preventing violence.⁶⁹ Additionally, in most of these accounts, especially Kaufman’s, the national elites have to be quite active in their belligerence by engaging in nationalist discourse.

⁶⁸ Within the broader study of civil wars, the attention is disproportionately paid to the state-insurgent dyad, that is to the relationship between the central government and the insurgents (Cunningham, 2013; Cunningham, 2014; Lichbach et al., 2003; Sambanis and Zinn, 2003; Sambanis and Zinn, 2006). In the literature on escalation and repression (Demirel-Pegg, 2011; Demirel-Pegg, 2014; Garrison, 2002; Regan and Norton, 2005) it is argued that repression by the central government leads to the escalation of violence and civil war. In the literature on bargaining failures and civil war, the attention is also paid to the state and the insurgents (Walter, 2009a; Walter, 2009b). The middle layer – the local elites – is missing. As (Kalyvas, 2006, 10) points out, in the literature on civil wars the focus is usually on “the interactions between unitary (state and nonstate) political actors [or] the interaction between political actors and the populations they rule [or] on interactions within small groups and among individuals”. Most research on civil wars either conflates these levels or focuses on just one, usually the first.

⁶⁹ Shesterinina demonstrates that the theories centring on the elites’ behaviour do not show how the mechanism of civil war onset exactly works. For example, they do not show how information “trickles down” to the population that these elites purport to arouse. Theories provided by Kaufman do not distinguish between various levels of

If we take these caveats into consideration and focus instead on the local elites and their divergent behaviours (clandestinely fostering separatism in one case and dampening it in the other), we need to ask what explains these behaviours and how they lead to conflict in one case and peace in the other. The central paradigm offered by the civil war literature and the literature on riots adopts a rationalist approach: elites act in pursuit of power, whether it is to keep power or to acquire more power (such as securing votes (Wilkinson, 2004)). If we measure power by economic and political assets that the local elites have acquired in their constituencies and discover that these elites had similar stakes, we would expect them to behave in a similar fashion. In other words, if an elite actor in the region A and an elite actor in the region B have significant political and economic stakes in their regions and stand to lose from the political change in the centre, they would respond to that change in a similar fashion. For example, they would attempt to change the politics in the centre by bargaining with the centre. They bargain by fostering the local protest movements. However, the situation in Ukraine contradicts this argument. Contrary to what has been argued (by Buckholz, 2019, in particular), I demonstrate that the stakes cultivated by the local elites in their regions mattered only to a certain extent. All the elites under consideration cultivated strong political or commercial ties with their respective regions. Both the Minister of the Interior and the ex-governor of Kharkiv Arsen Avakov and the incumbent mayor Hennadiy Kernes cultivated strong commercial and political ties in Kharkiv region.⁷⁰ Avakov was the founder of various banks and commercial structures in Kharkiv, as was Kernes. Their commercial interests dated back to late 1990s. Equally, their political ties with the region were strong, with Kernes occupying positions of power from 1998 and serving as the secretary of the city council since April 2002, while Avakov entered Kharkiv politics slightly later. Kernes became the city mayor in 2010. Similarly, in Donetsk, the long-serving mayor Oleksandr Luk'yanchenko (since 2002) enjoyed unbeatable popularity⁷¹ for more than a decade,⁷² while, not unlike their political counterparts in Kharkiv, the oligarch Rinat

authority in the population and how information travels between and among these levels (she aims to fill this gap) (Shesterinina, 2014).

⁷⁰ Here Avakov is described as one of the richest people in Ukraine: “Ia s udivleniem uznal, chto vklyuchen v sotniu samykh bogatykh liudei Ukrainy – A. Avakov”, *Status Quo*, 29 March 2007; and here as the most influential Kharkivite in Ukraine: “A. Avakov priznan samym vliiatel'nym khar'kovchaninom 2006 g. – rezul'taty oprosa”, *Status Quo*, 25 January 2007; “Weekly profiles new governor of eastern Ukrainian region”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 25 February 2005.

⁷¹ “Luk'yanchenko ostanetsia na postu mera Donetsk'a”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 February 2010.

⁷² Luk'yanchenko continued to serve as mayor in Donetsk until October 2014. By that time, Donetsk was torn by what one might call after Kalyvas a “dual sovereignty” situation.

Akhmetov and the incumbent governor Serhiy Taruta had strong commercial stakes in Donetsk region, dating back to late 1990s, albeit Taruta's stakes were much weaker than Akhmetov's, according to my interview with Journalist 1 (19 07 2019).⁷³

In both regions, the local elites opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan protest in late November 2013. When the governing informal network changed in Kyiv in February 2014, despite the strong stakes in their respective regions, the elites in Kharkiv and Donetsk demonstrated starkly divergent behaviours. The elites in Kharkiv refused to budge on the issue of federalisation with the pro-federal protestors; they methodically removed the radical streak from the pro-federal protest and cooperated with the security services in targeting individual protestors. In Donetsk, by contrast, the local elites supported some of the radical pro-Russian protest, refused to ban the protest, and, as has been attested in some scholarly studies and statements by activists, they engaged in clandestine financing of the protest because it helped them in bargaining with the centre.

Another approach to explaining the behaviour of elites argues that divisions and conflicts within and among elites create political opportunity for unrepresented groups to engage in collective action. As Tarrow (1998, 88) notes, "divisions among elites not only provide incentives to resource-poor groups to risk collective action; they encourage portions of the elite that are out of power to seize the role of "tribunes of the people". By contrast, when elites are cohesive and united, this prevents protest. In the case of Russia in late 1990s and early 2000s, the political elite's unity and cohesion prevented protest (Robertson, 2011, 8). Elite competition, by contrast, promoted protest as elites mobilised the public as part of their competition (ibid., 34). In Robertson's interpretation, the division among elites leads those lacking a strong hand in the current arrangements to mobilise the people. As Akin has argued in his research on elite networks, if elites are cohesive, as was the case in Ukraine on the eve of the Soviet Union's break up, armed conflicts are unlikely to occur when central state structures disintegrate. On the other hand, if elites are fragmented, as in the case of Georgia during the same period, there is likely to be

⁷³ It could be argued that Donetsk regional governor Andriy Shyshatskiy and Sloviansk mayor Nelia Shtepa had much weaker interests in Donetsk and Sloviansk respectively. This conditioned their behaviour in spring 2014, when Shyshatskiy first resigned and then left the ranks of the Party of Regions in late March 2014. Nelia Shtepa became rather infamous for endorsing the storming and occupation of the police station in Sloviansk by what later transpired to be Igor Strelkov's "Slavyansk" squad. Her behaviour spurred a drawn-out litigation against her.

a conflict (Akin, 2013). Using the social networks approach, he writes (ibid., 12): “Networks that coalesce or consolidate through bargaining and contraction tend to avoid violent conflict; networks that expand or extend tend to fail and to incite conflict.” In a similar vein, in his review of post-Soviet conflicts, Zurcher (2007) has argued that the elites’ ability to form compacts with each other could forestall conflict. Similarly, according to Kilavuz’s research on Tajikistan, civil wars can begin as a result of conflicts within elites and not as a result of polarisation of regional identities (Kilavuz, 2009; Kilavuz, 2011).

The situation in Ukraine prior and during the “Russian Spring” protests of 2014 contradicts the argument on elite cohesion and elite fragmentation and their respective roles in fostering violence and conflict. On the one hand, despite the domination of the Party of Regions in Kharkiv, the elites in Kharkiv were highly fragmented and competed with each other fiercely prior to the events of 2014. The opposition parties of Bat’kivshchina and Our Ukraine were small but mighty in Kharkiv, initiating the dismissal of the mayor Dobkin and the city council secretary Kernes on many occasions, by citing alleged violations of Ukrainian laws and participation in what they called “banditry”. Moreover, both Dobkin and Kernes were at loggerheads with the entire law enforcement apparatus in Ukraine and the governor Arsen Avakov prior to 2014. Both Dobkin and Kernes held strong anti-Maidan views before the pro-federal protest began in 2014. We therefore would expect them to act in a highly conflictual manner and use the pro-federal protest to bargain with the centre in Kyiv. Surprisingly, when the governing structures both in the centre and in the region changed and his political rivals were appointed to the key positions in the region, Kernes put his rivalries aside⁷⁴ and sided with the new Ukrainian government and the new regional appointees, while Dobkin ran for president, thus acknowledging the legitimacy of the new government (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018). None prevented the security apparatus in Kharkiv from targeting pro-federal protestors. By contrast, the elites in Donetsk were cohesive and had almost no conflicts with each other, apart from commercial ones, prior to the events of 2014. However, in 2014, the Party of Regions disintegrated in Donetsk, and the local elites fragmented into those who

⁷⁴ In October 2012, prior to the Rada elections, Ihor Baluta, a Bat’kivshchina deputy, who became Kharkiv regional governor in spring 2014, filed an appeal against Hennadiy Kernes on the grounds of unlawful political campaigning during the session of Kharkiv city council. See Pavel Kogachenko, “Kernes vyigral sud u politicheskikh opponentov”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 26 October 2012.

supported the aims of the radical pro-Russian protestors, albeit not consistently, and those who opposed them, such as the governor Taruta.

This leads us to the broader issue of political competitiveness⁷⁵ and its inability to explain why the elites in the regions acted in the way they did. Kharkiv can be characterised as a more competitive polity than Donetsk but being a more competitive polity tells only half of the story. Political competitiveness and elite fragmentation do not explain the cohesiveness of the elites' behaviour in Kharkiv in spring 2014. Why would one polity become extremely cohesive in its attempts to eliminate political opportunities for radical activism and the other polity would become fragmented? The relatively insulated and closed nature of politics in Donetsk region does not explain the behaviour of Donetsk region's elites. This is because in 2014 Donetsk region, previously considered to be politically impregnable, with the domination of the Party of Regions, emerged as a site of the most radical pro-Russian contention. The more competitive region of Kharkiv, on the other hand, witnessed the gradual closure of political opportunities for the radical and then, later, moderate pro-federal activism. In late February – early March 2014, radical activists, such as the members of “Oplot,” were detained, and the elites methodically confronted the radicals and removed their flags from government buildings. Moderate activists came to the forefront of the Russian Spring protest wave in Kharkiv and headed all protests. Some activists complained that the radical activists “worked for [Kharkiv mayor] Kernes,” and there were persistent disagreements in all camps. The Security Service of Ukraine worked methodically and unhindered in neutralising the radical separatist threat in Kharkiv throughout the period.

Political monopolisation or competitiveness are complex processes that do not happen overnight but develop over a long period of time. They are influenced by a variety of factors, such as the nature of the political economy (put simply, if a region has a more diversified economy, more people are engaged in varied productive activity, therefore, there are more chances for them to join different political parties; in regions where there are constant wage arrears at the enterprises, people dissatisfied with one party could

⁷⁵ Describing the conflict as a centre-periphery one is also not sufficient. Firstly, the concept of “centre-periphery” is not very precise in that it does not define the relations between the region and the centre in precise terms. The concept also fails to explain the behaviour of the regional elites at the start of the Anti-Maidan contention when the governing network in the centre was the same. Finally, as documented in the vast literature on federalism and conflict, the “centre-periphery” argument is more applicable to federal rather than unitary polities, to which Ukraine belongs.

always join another party), regional people's preferences, certain institutional path-dependencies, psychological and historical factors. In keeping political opportunities open for a radical protest when the governing network changes, the elites are not motivated by these processes. After all, in Kharkiv people voted uniformly for the Party of Regions for a very long time, whereas there was plenty of intra-elite conflict taking place in between elections. Therefore, the local elites are motivated by more immediate concerns, such as their relations with different networks that govern the state. The question to ask, therefore, is what explains the puzzling behaviour of the local elites towards the local protest once the governing network in Kyiv changed?

6. Definitions of elites

I start with the definition of my key term "local elites". In his book *Patronal Politics*, Henry Hale relies on Higley and Burton's broad definition of elites as "persons who... "are able, by virtue of their authoritative positions in powerful organizations," networks, and "movements of whatever kind, to affect... political outcomes" at the local and national level regularly and substantially."⁷⁶ Adapted to the post-Soviet context, Hale's definition of elites is still quite broad and encompasses "the country's machine bosses, oligarchs, and officials" (Hale, 2015, 11).

As documented in numerous studies, in the post-Soviet context, the line between political and economic elites is extremely blurred (Interview with Journalist 1, 19 07 2019). Political and economic actors are tightly connected in the complex webs of clientelism, while political parties act as vehicles of specific economic interests (D'Anieri, 2006; Hale, 2015, 101; Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116). In her detailed study of Donetsk region in late 1990s- early 2000s, Kerstin Zimmer argues that there was "[a] low degree of differentiation of political and economic system[s] and the predominance of personal networks over legal rules" (Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 112). She shows that there existed "strong relations between political decision-makers and economic actors [and] the direct political engagement of many oligarchs" (Zimmer, K., 2004, 290). She applies the term "administrative-economic groups" to describe the key groups of political and economic actors in the region (Zimmer, K., 2004, 308), which encapsulates the

⁷⁶ (Higley and Burton, 1989, 18) cited in (Hale, 2015, 11).

intimate links between these actors. In simple terms, this connection can be described as follows. Often the administrative actors in this relationship would protect the local business elites and promote their interests both in the region and nationally. In return, the local business elites would demonstrate a tax-compliant behaviour and support the region's social and cultural infrastructure financially (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019) (Zimmer, K.,2004).

In his discussion of the role of the elites in the Orange Revolution, Paul D'Anieri includes security personnel in his definition of the elites. According to D'Anieri, the actions of the security personnel who are able to control protests "are far more significant than previously appreciated" "in determining whether protests ever grow beyond a small size, and therefore whether repressing them ever becomes a major issue" (Lynch, T.,2010). Putting security forces under the umbrella of "elites" poses a challenge to the major alternative explanation of the Donbas conflict that emphasises the Ukrainian state weakness as the primary cause of the conflict. It essentially means that state weakness is mediated through the behaviour of the local elites and that the local elites' varying reaction (*permissive* or *forbidding*) to the local protest is still the most important explanatory variable. Given that in Ukraine the police and the security service are "separate structures" (Protest Participant in Kharkiv, Interview 28 08 2018), security forces and the police can be considered as "local elites," if the local bureaucrats maintain identifiable links to them and in any way influence their behaviour.

Based on these definitions and findings, in this study, local elites include political elites: these are regional bureaucrats such as governors, mayors, regional and city council secretaries and other members of the regional and city councils. These political elites were directly involved in the local Anti-Maidan, pro-federal, and pro-Russian protest in Ukraine in 2013 – 2014 (Interview with Elite Member 1, 22 07 2019). The local courts are also included in the definition as they played a vital part in banning or allowing protests. The role of the economic elites in the protest is much harder to determine; however, given their tight connections with the local political elites, they are also included in the definition. The local economic elites are local enterprise directors with a significant stake in the region. It should be noted that most political elites in question had business interests in their respective regions. This is despite the fact that the Ukrainian law does not allow an office-holder to maintain a business (Ukrainian Constitution 22.02.2014,

Article 78). Finally, if the regional bureaucrats influenced the behaviour of the security personnel, the latter is also included in the definition.

7. Political opportunity

To explain why and how one region becomes a site of a violent conflict, I start with the discussion of political opportunity for protest. Sidney Tarrow defines political opportunities as “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people’s expectations for success or failure” (Brockett, 2005; Tarrow, 1998, 76 - 77). He further refines the definition of political opportunities in “Power in movement” (2011): they are “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – sets of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics” (Tarrow, 2011, 32). It follows from this definition that political opportunity for protest can be a national as well as a regional phenomenon. It also follows that political opportunity for protest is inherently unstable.

Researchers working within the social movements literature emphasise the external nature of political opportunity for protest (Tarrow, 2011, 163; Tilly, 1978, 133). According to Charles Tilly, political opportunity is “the relationship between a group and the world around it” (Tilly, 1978, 7). It is the “environmental cues” that drive groups to push forward new demands and seek the extension of existing benefits (Almeida, 2008, 13). Opportunities for protest come from outside of movements and are independent of their resources and level of organisation. In broad terms, political opportunities can include changes in the external environment, the weakness of the state, shifting domestic support for the regime, and the emergence of incoherent state policies (Goldstone, J., and Tilly, C. 2001, 183; McAdam, 1982, 42).

As political opportunities are external by nature, even weak or disorganised challengers can take advantage of them (Tarrow, 2011, 33); in this way, the opportunity structure includes opening institutional access to new actors (Tarrow, 2011, 165). In their work, Tarrow and Almeida highlight the fact that contending groups do not have to possess significant organisational resources in order to take advantage of the opening political opportunities. They can be weak and disempowered (Almeida, 2008, 15). This corresponds strongly (with some caveats) to the empirical reality in Ukraine, as I demonstrate in the dedicated chapter on the process of protest in 2013 - 2014. The Anti-Maidan, pro-federal and pro-

Russian activists had no prior experience in conducting large scale protests and confronting the authorities. Prior to 2014, some of them were operating on the margins of Ukrainian politics or even outlawed. The opening political opportunities for contention raised the level of their confidence in affecting the desired change and, in some cases, brought about radical contention (Goldstone, J., and Tilly, C. 2001, 180).

Who creates political opportunities for protest? McAdam et al. (1996) provide a “highly consensual list” of four dimensions of political opportunity. Among these of interest is one dimension, namely “the presence or absence of elite allies” (Brockett, 2005, 16 - 17). In Brockett’s empirical account of contention in El Salvador and Guatemala, the “presence of elite allies” is one of the “crucial determinants of the success of contentious movements...” (Brockett, 2005, 33). Elites provide allies to the challengers, increasing their belief in a potential success (Almeida, 2008, 26). Similarly, the presence of elite allies is considered to be an important dimension of political opportunity structure by Goldstone and Tilly (Goldstone, J., and Tilly, C. 2001, 182; Tarrow, 2011, 165). For Tilly and Tarrow and McAdam et al. (2001), *certification*, that is “an external authority’s signal of its readiness to recognise and support the existence and claims of a political actor” (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007, 34), is one of the mechanisms that explain the emergence of contention (McAdam et al., 2001). If it is interpreted as a signal, it means that certification is available not only to domestic actors but also to foreign actors.

What concrete steps do the elites take in order to signal the opening of political opportunities for certain types of activism? In the context of liberalising regimes, Almeida, for example, includes “resource commitments and symbolic gestures emitted by liberalising states” (Almeida, 2008, 15). Not only emitting symbolic gestures, those who open political opportunities for protest can take concrete steps such as “officially registering and legalising non-governmental entities,” thereby sanctioning contention (Almeida, 2008, 15). This account is highly congruent with what we encounter in Ukraine empirically in spring 2014. The local elites in both regions opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan contention in 2013 – early 2014 by sanctioning sporadic Anti-Maidan groups, establishing their own Anti-Maidan organisations, appealing to the Anti-Maidan groups for help against the Euromaidan, and generally not preventing them from engaging in contentious action. In Kharkiv, local political elites provided the major rhetorical devices, such as the federalisation argument, to the Anti-Maidan protestors. I therefore

consider political opportunity within the vein of most recent research on the nature of political opportunity, which highlights its interactive nature: it essentially focuses on the interaction between political actors, such as elites and activists. In her book on mobilisation in Argentina and Ukraine, Olga Onuch defines “the concept of “*political* opportunity structures” ... [as] opportunities that are derived from the interaction of activists and political actors or institutions” (Onuch, 2015b, 36). In Tilly’s formulation, political opportunity also emerges through an interactive process. It is an action-and-response process: “a contender which finds the government increasingly responsive to its overtures anticipates further responsiveness” (Tilly, 1978, 133).

8. Why local elites open political opportunities for protest

In both regions, the opening of political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan contention in November 2013 can be considered as a region-specific process. This process unfolded under the same informal governing network in Kyiv, that is Viktor Yanukovych’s Party of Regions network. Greater political protest potential generates an empirical expectation that the more challenged the elites are by opposition parties or ordinary people, the more virulently they would react to protest that is not in their interest.⁷⁷ The Euromaidan protest therefore threatened to unseat the local elites, especially in Kharkiv. In line with the empirical expectation, owing to greater political protest potential in Kharkiv, its top political elites acted more aggressively towards the Euromaidan than did their Donetsk counterparts (Activist in Kharkiv, Interview, 16 07 2019). In this way, they opened political opportunities for alternative protest or Anti-Maidan. In some cases, the local elites used this alternative protest to directly counter the protest that was not in their interest, as it happened in Kharkiv.

The opening of political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan activists in 2013 – early 2014 in both regions (and especially in Kharkiv) can therefore be interpreted in a classic instrumental sense as the regional elites’ attempt to fight against the loss of power.⁷⁸ Charles Tilly writes in this regard: “members of the polity resist changes which would threaten their current realization of their interests even more than they seek changes which would enhance their interests. They fight tenaciously against loss of power, and

⁷⁷ Interest therefore is key, although Slater does allow for emotion to influence the elites’ actions (Slater, 2010).

⁷⁸ For some researchers, mass politics is considered the key variable. Slater, for example, argues that “mass politics threatens to introduce newly organised threats to property rights” (Slater, 2010).

especially against expulsion from the polity” (Tilly, 1978, 135). According to Tilly, the elites “would work against admission to the polity of groups whose interests conflict significantly with their own” (ibid.).

Tarrow further highlights the key role elites’ interest plays in protest and the process of policy changes: “elites are unlikely to be persuaded to make policy changes that are not in their interest” (Tarrow, 2011, 168). Regional elites fight against the loss of power even more tenaciously because they are more proximate to their constituents than national elites.

Additionally, as the local elites, especially in Donetsk, were used to one network – that is the network of Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions - dominating the state, this created a set of expectations that this one network would continue to dominate (I discuss this below). Therefore, it could be argued that the local elites, especially the elites in Donetsk, opened the political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan because they were expecting Yanukovich to stay in power.⁷⁹

As alluded in Tarrow’s definition, political opportunities for protest are inherently unstable and even fleeting. Moreover, their relative openness and closure varies from polity to polity. For example, in his book on protest in Central America, Brockett demonstrates the inherently unstable nature of political opportunities. In the case of Ukraine, whether political opportunities for a radical pro-federal and pro-Russian protest were opened or closed depended on the behaviour of the local elites, which, in turn, was conditioned by the change of the governing network in Kyiv.

As the pro-federal and pro-Russian protest potential was rising in both regions (that is, we can control for protest potential), the main puzzle to explain is why in one region the local elites attempted to control the protest and resisted the radicals, while, in the other, they endorsed some of the radical protest’s aims and allowed the protest to slip out of control. If both regions begin with similar political opportunities open for protest – and in one region the elites react even more aggressively to a protest that is not in their interest – with the change in the governing network in the centre, the local elites’ behaviours begin to diverge. In one region, the opportunities for radical protest and, by extension, for the foreign actors’

⁷⁹ There is some indirect evidence that due to the deference to their patron-in-chief Yanukovich, the local elites in Donetsk refused to engage in the talks on federalisation in November 2013 through to February 2014. In the past, the regional governor Anatoliy Blizniuk lodged federalisation proposals with Yanukovich. He was later reprimanded for doing so. In Kharkiv, the local elites engaged in the talks on federalisation due to the long tradition of commenting openly on the politics in the centre.

intervention, were closed. In the other, they remained open. In this way, the local elites sent signals of their intentions to both the protestors and the external actors who had an interest in stoking the pro-federal and pro-Russian protest. An external actor therefore might get involved in the conflict only after exploring options in all the regions susceptible to conflict.

In this way, direct and radical protest action, such as storming and occupation of an important government building (such as the Security Service building from which weapons can be acquired), are not some primordial aspects, inherent in the nature of activists themselves and emerging independently of their political environment. These are highly contingent, as they emerge through the process of protest and opening and closing political opportunities. If activists are given reasonable confidence that they can achieve something by making radical claims, they will proceed with making radical claims. If they are not, then their claims will be moderate. The local elites give them that confidence. They send signals to both activists and foreign actors.

In answering the question why the local elites react differently to the changes in the centre and how this impacts their actions towards the local protest - that is to explain the elites' behaviour in more precise terms - I supplement the conceptual insights offered in the social movements literature by the concepts derived from the literature on patronage, political clientelism⁸⁰ and, specifically, Henry Hale's book *Patronal Politics*. This literature, in turn, derives its insights from the bigger literature on informal politics. According to the literature on informal politics, politics in the post-Soviet world are governed according to the rules of informal rather than formal politics (Grzymala-Busse, 2010; Hale, 2015).⁸¹ This is a very broad context within which politics in these countries function.

I argue that the local elites encourage specific types of protest under certain conditions. Regional elites' aspirations and calculations do not differ from those of the national elites. They are based on two fundamental considerations. Firstly, political elites want to remain in power (Easter, 2000; Hale, 2015, 47; Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116), while business (or economic) elites want to keep their assets. As

⁸⁰ "Clientelism can be defined as a mode of social stratification in which clients and patrons are tied to one another in a mutually beneficial but unequal exchange" (Taylor-Robinson, M., 2006, 109).

⁸¹ According to Grzymala-Busse, informal institutions are "the unwritten, unofficial rules that generate shared expectations and strategic solutions" (Grzymala-Busse, 2010, 312).

Paul D'Anieri has argued, "... it is certainly plausible to build our understanding of Ukrainian politics on the generalization that the vast majority of Ukrainian politicians are self-interested and concerned with gaining and holding power" (D'Anieri, 2006, 152).

Secondly, as they are *regional* or *local* and not *national* elites, they want to continue accessing resources (Grzymala-Busse, 2010; Hale, H., 2007, 228 – 229; Robertson, 2011) to distribute to their constituents (Easter, 2000) and possibly themselves. The elites' success in these endeavours does not hinge upon the abstract concepts of regional political competitiveness or centre-periphery relations but on the concrete past success of remaining in power and getting resources under different governing networks.

Paradoxically, the more challenged Kharkiv elites unwaveringly sided with the new Bat'kivshchina-dominated governing network in Kyiv in 2014, despite having had turbulent relations with it in the past. This was first alluded to me by a prominent Ukrainian journalist who argued that now late Kharkiv mayor and a (former) Party of Regions member Hennadiy Kernes "can survive under any regime" (Ukrainian institute, 2017).

To put this in a broader context, I argue that the fundamental characteristic of the Ukrainian state is "a state of networks," or, more specifically, a state governed by informal networks with significant regional bases. Political patronage and clientelism are the fundamental aspects of the informal politics that govern post-Soviet states such as Ukraine (Hale, 2015, 21). Within the early Soviet context, Easter defines a "personal network" as "a nonkinship, informal association, within which exists group feeling and intimacy as well as group norms of behaviour" (Easter, 2000, 12). Vadim Kononenko defines the networks governing Russia as "a means of social interaction which is less formal than those between and within state institutions (Steen 2003: 141). As such networks can be found both outside the state institutions but also incorporated within and passing through institutional divisions such as ministries and administrative hierarchies. In this regard, networks are always personal and link up individuals or groups that share similar interests, allegiances, and identification" (Kononenko, V., 2011, 6). These definitions point to the crucial aspects of networks, such as their personal nature and the shared background of the members of these networks.⁸²

⁸² See also (Sharafutdinova, 2010).

9. Concept of patronal politics

To explain why the local elites in Kharkiv and Donetsk took different stances towards the changes in Kyiv and the local pro-federal and pro-Russian protest, I adapt Henry Hale's concept of patronal politics and demonstrate that there are certain aspects of this concept that explain the behaviour of the regional elites. Hale defines "patronal politics" as "politics in societies where individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments through chains of actual acquaintance, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorizations like economic class that include many people one has not actually met in person" (Hale, 2015, 9- 10). Hale then defines patrons and clients more precisely: "the most powerful people in these relationships can be called *patrons*, and more subordinate ones *clients*. Politics in patronalistic societies therefore revolves chiefly around personalized relationships joining extended networks of patrons and clients, and political struggle tends to take the form of competition among different patron-client networks" (ibid., 21). In the post-Soviet context, "patrons can be barons of business or the bosses of territorially circumscribed political machines" (ibid., 29). This corresponds to the empirical reality in Ukraine, where Viktor Yanukovich emerged as "the boss of [a] territorially circumscribed political machine," that is the Party of Regions.

At the basis of Hale's concept of patronal politics is "actual acquaintance". One, therefore, can expect "the core of many networks to be groups of people with long-standing and intense personal ties" (ibid., 36). Patrons are connected to clients through shared background. Moreover, the members of the same network can be acquainted with each other for a long time. In Ukraine, the Donetsk clan can be described as such a group, in which the ties between the core members of the group, such as Viktor Yanukovich, Rinat Akhmetov, Mykola Azarov and others, were long-standing and intense. In Hale's formulation, such acquaintance is part of "investment in one network". Hale writes extensively on this investment that takes place primarily within one network: "networks in reality are "sticky", with some people adhering to their own networks more strongly than others. This is because people have different degrees of investment in networks, which impacts their expected gains from staying or leaving" (ibid.). Hale highlights the importance of investment in a network and the density of interaction with other network members: "Investment has several forms. Sometimes it reflects the sheer amount of time one

has already been part of the network, or the density of interactions with other network members. Over time and with dense interaction, one can develop assets that enhance the gain one can expect from a network, assets like trust, reputation, clout, mutual understandings, and knowledge about how best to induce the different personalities in the network to do what you want them to do” (ibid.).

Therefore, in Hale’s framework “investment” is primarily investment in one particular network. His definition of investment is also laden with certain cognitive aspects, such as knowledge and reputation, which apply across inter-network and intra-network elite relations. I discuss these below in the section on concentrated and diffused patronage.⁸³ However, dense interaction with the members of competing networks can also be considered as a legitimate type of investment. It means that elites at the regional level are closely acquainted not only with the members of their preferred network but also with the members of competing networks. Additionally, investment can also be regional rather than national. At the regional level, in fact, sometimes the survival of the region and its political elites depends on the density of this interaction among the members of competing networks. This dense interaction contributes to the process of elite learning. Through this process, elites learn how to negotiate with the competing networks, how to use the resources of their preferred networks distributed across the political system, and what the competing networks prefer. Therefore, when the governing network suddenly changes in the centre, and no electoral contest precedes this change, the elites who have acquired the necessary negotiating skills through such process of iteration and learning start with a better negotiating capacity. Gzymala-Busse writes on elite learning, the iterative process in which different networks are engaged, and how these worked for the elites in Poland and Hungary: “The more elites are advanced on the basis of pragmatic competence rather than ideological orthodoxy ... and the more these parties engage in informal negotiation with opponents and policy experimentation, the more diverse and useful the skill sets and reputations of elite actors”(Grzymala-Busse, 2010, 327).⁸⁴ The section on concentrated and diffused patronage provides the discussion of elite learning under diffused and concentrated patronage.⁸⁵

⁸³ For other types of patronage in the Russian regions, see (Sharafutdinova, 2010)

⁸⁴ The literature on authoritarian learning also offers some insights as to the information aspects of elite learning (for bibliography, see (Hall, 2017).

⁸⁵ Whether a polity evolves around diffusion or concentration of patronage depends largely on the nature of its political economy. As Hale observes at the national level in Russia: “divergence among post-communist countries ... is likely to involve variation in levels of political competitiveness and control over the political economy” (Hale,

How do patrons build loyalty? Hale emphasises that patrons need to continue having access to valuable *resources* to reward those who remain loyal, to have a capacity for *enforcement* of punishments of those who are disloyal, and to *monitor* clients and “subpatrons” (Hale, 2015, 31). There are, however, situations when the patrons are absent from the centre. The regional elites, depending on their position within the system of patronage, react differently to the absence of a patron in the centre. For the elites who operate within the system of concentrated patronage, the absence of the patron presents problems because it cuts off their access to resources and endangers their positions in local government, unless they negotiate a viable deal with the centre. In our empirical case this was important for the elites in Donetsk region. For the elites in Kharkiv, who were operating within the system of diffused patronage, the absence of the patron meant that their disloyalty could not be monitored and punished. When they refused to endorse the radical pro-federal protest, Kharkiv elites ceased to be loyal clients of their former patron Yanukovych.

10. Concentrated vs diffused patronage

I argue that the local elites find themselves operating within a complex web of a specific regional patronage system. This system of regional patronage broadly describes the lines along which resources are delivered to the region and the “safeguards” that keep the elites in their seats and their assets protected. These lines (or personal networks) connecting the centre and the region are described by Easter as “a power resource [providing] an informal social structure by which information [is] exchanged, resources [are] obtained, and collaborative actions [are] planned” (Easter, 2000, 11). Holding constant other structural conditions, such as shared history and the presence of Russian speakers, as well as the aggregate pattern of the rising protest potential in both regions, we can argue that the main difference between the two regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv is the type of patronage that applies to their elites.

As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, the centralised nature of Ukraine, in which governors have been appointed by the President, and its evolution into a state of networks acted as structural constraints on the regional elites. The second set of structural constraints is the nature of the political economy in the regions. These two structural constraints shaped the regions into diffused or concentrated patronage

H., 2007, 247). As a result of privatisation deals in the 1990s, Donetsk emerged as a concentrated patronage region, whereas Kharkiv became a diffused patronage one because the enterprises there were mostly state-owned. Kharkiv was historically more pluralistic and more controlled by the centre, whereas Donetsk was not.

regions. The elites therefore functioned within a set of tight constraints shaped by the combination of the centralised nature of Ukraine and the nature of the regional political economy. Actual acquaintance of the elites at different levels through patronage eased these structural constraints.

We can therefore distinguish between two types of patronage: diffused and concentrated. For one group of elites, their success in remaining in power and securing resources is premised upon their preferred network's continuing presence in the centre (Zimmer, K., 2004, 290). These elites invest heavily in their preferred network, never switch to other networks⁸⁶ and interact with the members of other networks only in cases of "political emergencies" (Kudelia, S., 2010; Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015). That is, these elites are placed within the concentrated patronage system. The other group of regional elites, by contrast, has been historically placed within the diffused patronage system, the resources of which it can successfully exploit. This group of elites is never strongly attached to one patron, even when this patron is ideologically allied with these elites or is known to have provided them with considerable resources.

10.1. Diffused patronage

Under diffused patronage, the region benefits from access to two or more competing networks. It is effectively "plugged into" various patronage channels, through which resources are delivered. Predominantly state-owned regional enterprises do not depend on the largesse of any particular network but rather on how the key regional elites manage to utilise their political clout and extract resources from the centre. Elites in these regions exploit the links with their preferred networks. Ongoing conflicts between the members of competing networks are resolved by accessing resources of the preferred network distributed across the political system, including in the judiciary. Through the iterative process of confrontation with competing networks and cooperation with the preferred network, the regional elites acquire the knowledge of other networks' preferences and loopholes in the political-judiciary system that they can exploit. This ensures the elites' continuing access to resources and power. The centre is able to monitor the region more closely, that is information flows between the centre and the region are more transparent. Such transparency of information flows is ensured when the patrons of competing networks

⁸⁶ Rinat Akhmetov, the member of the Donetsk clan and the Party of Regions, was not known to switch to any competing network (Hale, 2015, 333) and was extremely cautious when negotiating with the main rival network of Bat'kivshchina (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015).

appoint their own clients to the top positions in the region. In Ukraine, Kharkiv region can be described as a classic “diffused patronage” region in which the regional governor Arsen Avakov (2005 – 2010) came from the network of President Yushchenko, Our Ukraine, and then switched to Bat’kivshchina, the two networks competing with the Party of Regions’ network which dominated the region. In Kharkiv, enterprises were state-owned and received subsidies and government contracts regardless of which network was in power.

Diffused patronage regions can benefit from multiple, and not just one, patrons’ career rise to the centre. Easter writes on this in the context of the early Soviet state: “For the members of regional personal networks, prospects of advancement became linked to the careers of core network members. Core members who made it to the centre could play the role of patron much more effectively. Regionally placed clients benefitted from a patron’s proximity to the wellsprings of organizational resources. For this reason, the powers and resources allocated to particular regional organizational positions fluctuated with the political fortunes of centrally located patrons” (Easter, 2000, 34). When the governing network changes, the regional elites who were placed under the diffused patronage system are able to adjust to the change very quickly and use their clientelistic capital, such as negotiating skills and more transparent centre-region information flows, without having to resort to extended bargaining with the centre for preferential treatment. The elites operating within the system of diffused patronage are building resilience to survive under any network without having to negotiate major deals with the victorious network. In essence, the regional elites are not investing heavily in any patron, therefore, if a preferred network’s patron is ousted and the competing network becomes dominant, the regional elites in diffused patronage systems are able to adjust more quickly.⁸⁷

As under concentrated patronage, diffused patronage creates certain cognitive conditions for the members of competing networks. The iterative processes involved in elites’ confrontation and cooperation create expectations about the behaviour of other networks. To paraphrase Kitschelt and Wilkinson, “the repeated [*conflict*] in exchange relations ... makes the behaviour of the exchange partner appear predictable” (Kitschelt, H., and Wilkinson, S. 2007, 8). The cognitive expectations about the

⁸⁷ In fact, as one journalist noticed, there was no such thing as “Kharkiv clan”. See “Budushchie nardepy-khar’kovchane: khar’kovskoe lobbi ili lobbisty iz Kharkova”, *Status Quo*, 5 October 2007.

behaviour of competing network members include the fact that network changes would almost invariably be followed by punishment of the disloyal and the marginalisation of alternative networks. If the elites do not learn that they would be marginalised if they resist the now-dominant network, they can expect appropriate punishments (Hale, 2015). In Ukraine, the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv witnessed a long-standing conflict between the representatives of the Party of Regions and the governor Avakov. After Avakov's rise to the centre in February 2014, the Party of Regions members, such as Kernes and Dobkin, could expect retribution from Avakov had they encouraged radical pro-Russian protest in Kharkiv.

Hale also argues that the changes in the constitution and formal electoral laws have effects on informal networks. He writes: "the most important function of a constitution ... is ... to signal who (if anyone) is most likely to be patron-in-chief and to provide other focal points that help structure the way all these networks arrange and rearrange themselves". "Constitutions," he continues, "that declare a single dominant chief executive ... shape expectations as to who wields ultimate power in a country" (Hale, 2015, 10). Hale therefore distinguishes between the "divided-executive" constitutions when the Prime Minister is, by and large, independent from the President and is beholden to Parliament and "dominant chief executive", when the President wields disproportionate power in the country.

At the regional level, these periods of divided-executive and dominant chief executive affect local elites differently. For those who find themselves within the system of diffused patronage, the period of divided-executive is not a period of discoordination, *pave* Hale (Hale, 2015, 238), but a period when the region can "plug into" and exploit the resources of different networks. Through conflict with the competing networks, the elites learn about the preferences of the competing networks and the resources of their preferred networks that they can exploit. This ensures their political survival and the overall survival of the region. The elites in these regions therefore would discourage radical protest because it threatens their relations with the centre and rival networks.

10.2. Concentrated patronage

Under *concentrated* patronage, regional elites' investment is heavily concentrated in one network. Regional elites are able to remain in power and keep access to resources only when their preferred network

maintains constant access to power in the centre, be it in government or opposition. Political elites in concentrated patronage systems are isolated from other networks,⁸⁸ while private enterprise is personalised and geared towards one network. Its owners have no experience of switching to and are extremely reluctant to cooperate with other networks. Due to the network members' isolation from other networks and little inter-elite conflict, there are no iterative processes of elite learning taking place. In the past, if the networks in the centre were reconfigured unfavourably, the network's continuing access to power was ensured through the process of elite bargaining with the centre.

Based on the insights from Kitschelt and Wilkinson on electoral clientelism, the system of concentrated patronage creates certain *cognitive conditions*, that is certain expectations about the behaviour of others within the network. As Kitschelt and Wilkinson write, "ongoing network of *social relations* generates widely held cognitive expectations about appropriate behaviour that in turn reduce monitoring efforts" (Kitschelt, H., and Wilkinson, S. 2007, 18). Through the iterative process of learning, "the repeated success of exchange relations" certain knowledge is created, including "the knowledge of the other side's motivations and payoffs from alternative courses of action" (ibid., 8). This is consistent with Hale's description of patronal politics in that it creates knowledge about the actions of others. In concentrated patronage regions, the behaviour of network partners is "predictable and low risk" (ibid.). The network members can therefore expect low transaction costs when exchanging with each other. Under concentrated patronage, the behaviour of other networks appears high risk, unless there are certain safeguards in place which are negotiated through bargaining. These cognitive conditions mean that the regional elites are always concerned that under a competing network, their access to resources can be cut off.

When the networks are expected to change and there is an electoral contest preceding the change,⁸⁹ the regional elites under concentrated patronage take time to adapt to the new networks, as history demonstrates. They might engage in the mobilisation of people for protest and bargaining to extract

⁸⁸ As Robertson alludes in his book on protest in Russia, elites in some regions can be isolated and not very well-connected (Robertson, 2011, 16).

⁸⁹ Here I borrow the key insight from Hale on electoral contest: "a victory in a head-to-head high-stakes contest between rival networks can be among the most powerful shapers of expectations as to which network is likely to be dominant in the future" (Hale, 2015, 342).

preferential treatment from the centre⁹⁰ or force a political change in the centre (D'Anieri, 2006, 139). In essence, they buy time in order to coordinate themselves in the new system. Over time, elites operating under concentrated patronage come to use certain stable bargaining ploys. If the network is completely ousted from power, and there is no electoral contest that allows the elites to bargain, re-coordinate around the emerging patrons and negotiate viable deals with these emerging patrons, then the regional elites fall back on the old bargaining ploys but the time lag between the ouster of the network and prospective success of bargaining extends.⁹¹ This is further aggravated if under the dominant chief executive, the regional elites' preferred network acquired considerable power before the ouster of the chief patron and the collapse of the network.⁹² Hale writes on the situations when the formerly powerful network weaken, those who invest into these networks most heavily can fall into despair, but there are "creative entrepreneurs" (Hale, 2015, 97 - 98). In this regard, the Donets'k clan can be described as a network most prone to despair, while Kharkiv region as a "creative entrepreneur".

For the elites that find themselves within the concentrated patronage system, the periods of divided-executive are characterised by heavy investments into one network which continues to access power, be it in government or opposition. However, contrary to what Hale argues it is one network's ascension to unlimited power and not the periods of divided-executive that truly discoordinates networks. If their preferred network acquires disproportionate power, the elites who are placed within concentrated patronage invest into this network even more. In fact the network's acquisition of disproportionate power creates expectations among the regional elites that their preferred network will dominate in the future.⁹³ In this way, it disrupts the delicate balance of regionalism and creates a disequilibrium.

⁹⁰ Donets'k regional elites' demand for federalisation in spring 2014 masked the desire to retain as much leverage over the regional affairs as it was under the old Party of Regions network; to continue operating under reduced transaction costs; to continue enjoying budgetary resources and be relatively isolated from other networks politically and economically; to avoid the danger of retaliation through the prosecutors and the Security Service of Ukraine.

⁹¹ In the empirical literature on the Donbas conflict, this is referred to most commonly as "they overplayed their hand", "they lost control of protest" (in Russian, "*zaigrulis'*").

⁹² Sabic and Zimmer describe a situation of concentrated patronage in the following terms: "the *komanda* cutting across all kinds of formal institutional differentiation: it links administration and parliament, different political parties, the media, and economic organisations and corporations"; "the *komanda* depends on the patron in the political centre and when he loses influence the *komanda* tends to dissolve" (Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116)

⁹³ As Hale writes on expectations more specifically: "expectations, in fact, turn out to be a more fundamental determinant of patrons' power than their resources or organization" (Hale, 2015, 34). If the regional elites expect one network to dominate, they will obey it.

In this way, Yanukovych's presidency (or the period of one dominant chief executive)⁹⁴ provided resources for Yanukovych's most important constituents, such as Donetsk and Kharkiv regions, but it did irreparable damage to the inter-network relations. In essence, it disrupted the delicate balance of regionalism that served Ukraine so well in the past,⁹⁵ in that it developed a sense of entitlement among the regional elites in Donetsk, lengthened their expectations about the network's staying power and caused them to invest heavily into one network.⁹⁶ When the network changed, the elites attempted to fall back on their old bargaining ploys but they miscalculated the time lag needed to adjust to the new dominant network. During this time lag the radical contention developed in the region.

Finally, a word is in order on the Ukrainian government's decision to launch a military operation in Donetsk region in mid-April 2014. This decision can also be explained by the reference to the local elites' behaviour. In diffused patronage regions, the patrons of competing networks can monitor the clients of other networks by appointing the governors from their networks to these regions. It means that the information exchange is much more open in these regions (the leash is short); while in the closed configuration of concentrated patronage regions, the information flows are closed and it is impossible to monitor the region and the actions of the elites. This means that popular armed mobilisation can take place without much monitoring and with the complicity of the local elites. It means that the bargaining between the centre and the region will necessarily break down and that the military action would be necessary because the elites in concentrated patronage regions are not operating in a transparent fashion. It means that, to an extent, it is not the people who are the true rebels but the elites.

H3: the local elites would encourage or discourage specific types of protest depending on the regional patronage system

⁹⁴ Under Yanukovych, Ukraine moved closer to the patrimonial type of polity. Easter writes on patrimonial polities: "... a patrimonial infrastructure refers to a personalistic arrangement, distinguished by the appropriation of state resources by those entrusted with their use" (Easter, 2000, 14). As opposed to the Weberian arrangement of bureaucracy, in this system the agents of the state are selected on the basis of patronage rather than on the basis of formalised administrative law and standardised procedures (14).

⁹⁵ Specifically, in the case of Ukraine, "regionalism" has had mostly a positive effect in the past. In the past, this resulted in a state of equilibrium, as noted by Ukrainian experts Gwendolyn Sasse and Paul D'Anieri. In fact, personal networks can help build and sustain state capacity, as has been demonstrated in Gerald Easter's book on the early Soviet state.

⁹⁶ D'Anieri and Kuzio and Kudelia converge on the idea that eastern Ukrainian forces were leading Ukraine for a good part of its independence (D'Anieri, 2006; Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015).

11. Conclusion

The differences between the trajectories taken by Donetsk and Kharkiv regions have been intuited but not studied systematically. Scholars have overwhelmingly focused on the origins of the conflict in the Donbas and not considered comparatively the regions where conflict could have taken place but in the end did not. The major alternative approaches that have emerged from this discussion are the history and identity approach and the role of foreign actors approach. These approaches lie within the larger literature on civil wars, emotions and politics, and the role of foreign actors in instigating conflicts. I have demonstrated that the history and identity approach does not explain the occurrence of conflict in the Donbas because of the complexity of attitudes of the Donbas people to the events in 2014. This approach also does not take into account a structurally similar region where similar strong emotions were present and the propensity to protest violence was even greater. The role of foreign actors approach assumes too quickly that a foreign actor would get involved in the conflict straightaway. In this way, the causality is reversed and the foreign actor is blamed for the conflict. I have demonstrated that, with the role of certain Russian individuals at the incipience of the conflict being largely established, the involvement of the Russian *state* in the conflict was by no means assured. More importantly, Igor Strelkov, the external actor who arrived in mid-April in Donetsk region, could have appeared in a different region, provided *the political opportunity was opened* there for him. I therefore focused squarely on those who open the political opportunity for protest in the regions and those who exploit it *before* foreign actors arrive on the scene. These are the local elites and local activists. I have argued that we need to focus on the local elites, and I have built the theory of why the local elites would open political opportunities for activists. This theory posits that political opportunities for specific types of protest are inherently unstable. Local elites open these opportunities when they are challenged by a protest that is not in their interest. The main puzzle to explain, however, is why some local elites close political opportunities for a radical protest, whereas others keep them open. I have argued that the regional elites' main objectives are to remain in power, to keep their assets, and continue accessing resources in the centre. In relation to these objectives, the regional elites find themselves positioned in the different systems of regional patronage. Under diffused patronage, the region benefits from access to a variety of networks, while the local elites come into conflict with competing networks through which they learn

about the preferences of these competing networks and how to negotiate with them. State ownership of regional enterprises ensures that the region is “plugged into” a variety of networks. The local elites therefore do not invest in any particular patrons and when their preferred patron is absent from the centre, they are able to adjust to the new networks more easily. Under concentrated patronage, by contrast, the regional elites invest more heavily into one network. When this network acquires disproportionate power, it lengthens these elites’ expectations and leads them to develop a sense of entitlement. When the network suddenly changes, the local elites are unable to adjust quickly to the new reality, taking time to bargain with the centre. It is precisely during this period of bargaining when the radical contention develops.

Chapter 2: Tools of Trade: The Methodology

1. Justification of a comparative case study

Patton defines a case study as “an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case ... over time through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals” (Patton, 2014, 259). In more specific terms, as Yin puts it, “case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, 1).

My research project complies fully with Yin’s and Patton’s definitions of case studies. In my case studies, I look at the factors that have been missing in the literature - the local elites and activists. I pose the question “why and how a protest turned into a war⁹⁷ in one case and not in the other”; I have no control over the events, as all of them happened in the past and the people who have been involved in these events reside in a different country; I also focus on a contemporary phenomenon. I have developed certain theoretical propositions to guide the research and I rely on multiple sources of evidence, such as newspaper reports, government documents, social media, blogs, videos, and interviews. According to Yin’s classification of different types of case studies, my case study is explanatory in that I seek out the mechanism that led to a war in one case and not in the other.

My original intention was to compare Donetsk and Luhansk regions. However, to avoid sampling on the dependent variable, I selected Kharkiv city, where no conflict took place, as the comparative case. In theoretical terms, the cases of Kharkiv city and Donetsk region warrant the use of a “most similar systems design” because of their similar initial conditions. In such a design, one looks at cases which share most characteristics, such as political (the governing system) and cultural (for example, linguistic) (Przeworski and Teune, 1970, 32). More specifically, in such designs, “common systemic characteristics are conceived as “controlled for,” whereas intersystemic differences are viewed as “explanatory variables”

⁹⁷ I deliberately omit calling the war in Ukraine an “internal” or “inter-state” war in this chapter, as explained in the theory chapter. The best definition of this war that has been offered in the academic literature seems to be Vladimir Rauta’s definition - an “internationalised civil war” (Rauta, 2016).

(ibid., 33). As a result, the factors shared between the two systems are omitted from the analysis and the researcher looks for variables that differentiate these systems as explanatory variables (ibid., 34). Kharkiv and Donetsk do indeed share similar structural conditions, such as history, the number of Russian speakers, and geographical proximity to Russia. The case of Kharkiv has been touched upon in the academic literature and journalistic reports, but it has not been studied systematically. Upon my own investigation, I observed similar protest dynamics in both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region during the “Russian Spring”. When investigating the “Russian Spring” in Donetsk region at the early stage of this project, I found some references to Kharkiv’s local elites and activists in pro-Russian activists’ testimony. Finally, one of the protest organisers in Kharkiv told me in an interview that there was always a possibility of an armed conflict in Kharkiv (Protest Organiser 1 Interview 24 09 2018). I therefore decided to select Kharkiv city as the “negative case”.

Why did I choose Donetsk rather than Luhansk region to compare with Kharkiv? There are several reasons for bounding the case geographically to Donetsk region rather than Luhansk. Donetsk was the first city in the Donbas where a major pro-Russian protest took place on 1 March 2014, with around ten thousand people gathering on Lenin Square between 1 and 6 March. It was also the first city in the Donbas where pro-Russian protesters seized a government building, managed to stay there for nearly a day, and elected a people’s governor. After this, pro-Russian contention diffused very quickly in Donetsk region. It was in the town of Sloviansk in Donetsk region where important government buildings were seized by the local separatists and Russian non-state actors on 12 April, making way for the first military action by the state from 13 April 2014. My units of analysis therefore are the geographical units of Kharkiv city, Donetsk city, and various smaller towns in Donetsk region, where the Euromaidan, Anti-Maidan, and Russian Spring protests took place (e.g. Sloviansk, Mariupol and Horlivka); local elites; and pro-federal and pro-Russian movements.

There are some inherent issues with case studies. For example, they have been criticised for having little generalisability potential. Yin, for example, writes that the goal of a case study should be a “generalising” and not a “particularising” analysis (Yin, 2003). Patton (2015, 424 – 426) advocates the following safe strategy of generalising from case studies: “we generalise most confidently when we can specify completely and exactly a. which parts of one variable b. are related to which parts of another variable c.

through which mediating processes. d. with which salient interactions, for then we can transfer only those essential components to the new application to which we wish to generalise. The strategy here is breaking down the finding into competent parts and processes so as to identify the essential ones”. In other words, we can break down the mechanism we are interested in into its constituent parts and see if these parts work to produce an outcome in other political settings. This can work particularly well across cases within the same country. In my case, the key mediating processes are elites’ and activists’ behaviours and the salient interactions are the interactions between these actors.

2. Mixed methods research design

I use qualitative research design with some quantitative elements, such as protest cataloguing and content analysis. I do not use complex statistical methods, such as regressions, due to the small-scale nature of the protest under study and the limited number of cases (small-N). Creswell and Plano-Clark describe a mixed methods research design as “the type of research in which a researcher ... combines elements of qualitative and quantitative ... approaches ... for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011, 4). The advantages of a mixed methods research derived from this definition therefore are: 1. The inclusion of multiple points of view; 2. The depth and breadth of analysis; 3. Triangulation and corroboration.

Creswell defines qualitative research as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, 42) and how this is related to participants’ views and experiences. In quantitative research design, researchers bring their own meaning into the research process, the main aim being to test theories from which such meanings may emerge. By contrast, in qualitative research, the subjects of research – interview participants, social media users – create meaning, which researchers are there to uncover and report in their research. More broadly, qualitative research designs help uncover the intricacies of the key actors’ behaviour, how their interpretations of the given information influence their behaviour, and how the aggregation of the key actors’ behaviour brings about the outcome of interest. Not only seeking meaning that participants ascribe to a certain phenomenon or situation, qualitative research design is also usually used if a concept or phenomenon needs to be explored and understood because little research has been done about it.

Qualitative approach may be needed because the topic is new, and existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study (Creswell, 2014). For my purposes, the reason why I use qualitative research design is because the topic under study has not been explored in enough detail. There are academic articles and journalist reports about it, but no one, to my knowledge at least, has examined the Donbas conflict comparatively.

In accordance with the traditional qualitative research design, I apply both deductive and inductive types of logic to the research design. The deductive logic uses certain theoretical propositions derived from the empirical and theoretical literature that guide the data collection and analysis. In my case, such propositions are concerned with the specific patterns in the key actors' behaviours. These are derived from my reading of the theoretical literature. Deductive logic helps sift through the data to look for patterns and themes, so it stops being the case that "everything is relevant".

It is very important, however, to stress that deductive logic is not sufficient. It needs to be constantly refined, as one goes systematically through the data. Some theories of mobilisation and wars tend to be highly rigid and even too simplistic, as they do not allow for variation of experiences, chance, and the general "messiness" of social reality, particularly in such complex circumstances as war onset. It is very important therefore to be open to "inductive insights," that is insights not predicted by theories, as they introduce complexity to the discussion and, via this complexity, draw us closer to the reality. For this, inductive logic is adopted (Blaikie, 2007, 9). Thus, I observe data as I go along and then establish patterns or themes emerging from the data that refine or even refute the theoretical propositions derived deductively.

2.1 Process tracing method

Process tracing is one of the methods within the qualitative research tradition. According to George and Bennett, "the process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (George and Bennett, 2005, 206) or, more specifically, it is "... the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case with the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might actually explain the case" (Bennett,

A., and Checkel, J. 2015, 7). Causal mechanisms can be defined as “ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities” (George and Bennett, 2005, 137). In other words, a causal mechanism can be conceptualised as composed of entities or actors that undertake activities, which produce change (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 29). In its analytic template, process tracing identifies who the relevant actors are, how their preferences are formed, how they choose their action, and how their behaviours are aggregated to produce an outcome (Schimmelfennig, F., 2015, 106).

The main distinguishing characteristics of process tracing are theoretical “eclectism”, the use of multiple sources of evidence, consideration of biases in the sources (Bennett, A., and Checkel, J. 2015, 21), and the engagement with alternative explanations (also called “equifinality”). “Theoretical eclectism” is essentially an assembly of propositions gathered from different theories (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 35). As outlined above, processes or mechanisms consist of parts, and different theories can offer different predictions about the behaviour of each part. Therefore, a certain degree of such “eclectism” is necessary to achieve a fuller explanation. This is particularly relevant to the present case, since there is no single theory about why protests turn into a war. Different theoretical propositions will have to be amalgamated to see if they predict the behaviour of the key actors and how this behaviour contributes to the outcome of interest.

The best works using process tracing have used written, oral and video (or media) data to substantiate the processes they sought to describe. In these works, such sources were constantly combined and checked for congruity and incongruity, rather than used on their own (Checkel, 1997; Onuch, 2015b; Shesterinina, 2014; Wood, 2003). They were “equally tough” on the potential biases in their sources, such as editorial or personal biases.

With regard to its attention to alternative explanations, process tracing “casts the net widely for alternative explanations, including theoretical explanations in the academic literature, the more context-specific arguments that historians or regional or functional experts have offered, the implicit theories of journalists or others following the case, and the understandings participants have about what they are doing and why they are doing it” (Bennett, A., and Checkel, J. 2015, 18 - 21).

Beach and Pedersen (2013) distinguish between theory-testing, theory-building, and explaining-outcome types of process tracing. I follow Elizabeth Wood (2003) and Anastasia Shesterina (2014) and use the explaining-outcome type of process tracing. This is justified on the grounds that the case is very recent and has not been explored in enough depth to test theories. Only certain theoretical predictions about the behaviours of the key actors and how they bring about an aggregated outcome can be tested.

Overall, the use of the process tracing method is justified on several grounds. Process tracing is particularly suitable for accounting for and explaining a complex phenomenon (George and Bennett, 2005, 206). Protests and wars are inherently complex phenomena, especially now, as there are not only much greater number of actors with complex behaviours involved in them, to whom much greater access can be gained than before, but there are also infinite streams of information that run between and among these actors and shape their reactions to the events and behaviours. These make modern conflicts inherently complex to study. Process tracing also helps us avoid making sweeping generalising or probabilistic statements, as, for example, is practice in international relations research (George and Bennett, 2005); thus it makes the research output more fine-grained. Finally, because the transition from protest activity into a war is a process in itself, then this conceptualisation invites the use of process tracing.

Some scholars criticise process tracing for being essentially a narrative account of a process, with all the pitfalls of narrative accounts, such as being too descriptive and paying little attention to theory (George and Bennett, 2005). With the study of wars and protest, it is more problematic to avoid narrative, as processes unfolding before our gaze are highly dependent on the temporality and sequence of events. Avoiding narrative in an account of a war onset would result in unnecessary repetition and omissions of key explanatory variables, based on such temporality and sequence.

Finally, it is important to offer some discussion of the “critical juncture,” as identifying critical junctures is part of the practice of using the process tracing method. There can be major differences in the views of the researchers and the actors who are in the midst of the events on what the critical junctures in any given process are. In my interviews with some protest participants and activists in Kharkiv, the events of 6 to 8 April 2014, when the attempt to establish Kharkiv People’s Republic was aborted and the pro-

federal protestors were evicted from Kharkiv regional administration building, were identified as the critical juncture. Activist from Donetsk identified 26 May “when the war came to Donetsk” as the critical juncture. However, as a researcher looking very closely at the process of protest and the behaviour of the regional elites and someone who is not affected by the subsequent events, I identify the change of the governing network in Kyiv in February 2014 as the critical juncture from both the theoretical and empirical point of view. I elaborate on this in the dedicated chapter.

2.2. Protest or event cataloguing

Process tracing usually points to the underlying patterns explaining events. On the other hand, protest or event cataloguing describe the aggregate patterns of protest. I have therefore used protest cataloguing to test the hypotheses about political protest potential and protest intensity in the Ukrainian regions.⁹⁸ I found that there are certain aggregate patterns of protest that can only be explained by using process tracing. For example, event cataloguing pointed that Russian flags, the flags of the radical movements such as Donetsk Republic, and chants “Russia” were present at almost all protest events of the “Russian Spring” in Donetsk, whereas in Kharkiv the chant “Russia” and Russian flags gradually disappeared after 16 March. Radical protest as such failed to emerge in Kharkiv. This was not because of the signals from the external patron Russia, which sent signals to all the regions in the south-east of Ukraine. Process tracing revealed how the political opportunities for radical protest were opened by the local elites in Donetsk and how these were used by activists. Similarly, aggregate patterns of attacks on ordinary people and violence against the elites can be explained by the inter-elite conflict.

3. Why do Internet research

Contrary to what I originally thought, for Kharkiv, there is a plethora of websites, of different ideological hues, which reported on the events of the Euromaidan and Russian Spring. There are fewer Internet resources on the Donetsk region. The two major Internet newspapers for Donetsk are *Novosti Donbassa*⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The codebook is based on all the codebooks found in (Ketchley, 2017) and Neil Ketchley’s lecture notes. See (della Porta, 1995); Tilly, Charles. 1966. “Disturbances in France, 1830-1860 and 1930-1960,” Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor: Michigan; McAdam, Doug, John McCarthy, Susan Olzak and Sarah Soule. 2009. “Dynamics of Collective Protest in the U.S. 1960-1995.”

⁹⁹ <http://novosti.dn.ua/>.

and *Ostro.org*.¹⁰⁰ Both reported prolifically on the events in 2013 – 2014, albeit, due to their strong pro-Ukrainian stance (Oleksiy Matsuka, the chief editor of *Novosti Donbassa*, was a member of Bat’kivshchina for a long time),¹⁰¹ they might have underreported the extent of radicalism in Donetsk. For example, after the storming and occupation of the regional administration building on 6 April, they cited numerous sociological surveys demonstrating that the people of the Donbas wanted to remain in Ukraine and that a potential for radical separatism in the Donbas was small. I therefore had to corroborate their data with the data on *Vkontakte* (Vk.com), blogs and interviews. *Novosti Donbassa* provide an excellent archive (dating back to 2003), which I perused for the chapter on the elites. Some other substantive detail on the elites had to be corroborated with the Ukrainian laws, other Internet archives, as well as the interviews with the elites and activists.

Internet newspapers, such as *Status Quo* and *MediaPort*, provided good archives dating back as far as 2000, which I used for the chapters on Kharkiv. Using key word search and corroborating on key words eased research efforts. As someone with a solid experience of painstakingly leafing through printed press in physical archives, I must say using the Internet allowed me to cover greater date range and greater variety of subjects. I also took advantage of the recent move towards transparency in government in Ukraine and corroborated specific data on the local elites and statements by the elites across with the government publications, such as *Holos Ukrayiny*¹⁰² and the Verkhovna Rada website.¹⁰³

For all its flaws, social media platform *Vkontakte* (Vk.com) proved to be an excellent source of information and a medium to get access to people. For example, I was able to get information about the views of and the events organised by the “younger movements”, such as Donetsk Republic and Pavel Gubarev’s *Narodnoe Opolchenie Donbassa* (People of Donbas’ Self-Defence) via Vk.com. Vk.com proved indispensable when collecting information about the events organised by and views of the various pro-federal and pro-Russian movements in Kharkiv as well. Some recruitment into these movements was

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.ostro.org/>.

¹⁰¹ “Donchane uchatsia nenavidet’ svoego mera”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 31 July 2006.

¹⁰² <http://www.golos.com.ua/>.

¹⁰³ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/index>.

undertaken via Vk.com. In the absence of contacts in Ukraine, Vk.com and Facebook became my main gateways to activists, local elites, political scientists, and ordinary people.

4. Internet newspapers

Journalist reports have been extensively used both in historical and sociological research. Often, however, such research focuses on the study of representations of certain phenomena, situation or individual in the news. For example, in a book about British Muslims in the news, Elizabeth Poole examines the representations of British Muslims and Islam in several leading broadsheet newspapers after the two major world events, the 9/11 and the 2003 war in Iraq (Poole and Richardson, 2010). The logic and strategy of such research is often critical discourse analysis (Baker et al., 2013).

In this book I do not use critical discourse analysis, although my reading on critical discourse analysis has helped me to approach newspaper reports more critically. My use of newspaper reports is limited to establishing the chain of salient events that occurred in the Ukrainian regions between 2002 and early 2014 that involved the local elites and activists. Newspaper reports are useful primarily because they help establish such key events on the ground. Reports can help structure interviews with protest organisers, participants, and elites and do further triangulation with the social media. At the same time, it does not mean that I accept news reports uncritically. In fact, Beach and Pedersen 2013 argue that newspaper reports on their own should not be used for the purposes of process tracing, and the information in them has to be triangulated with the information derived from other data sources. This is corroborated with the insight derived from the critical discourse analysis described above. The main premise of critical discourse analysis in relation to news is the fact that news reports are often carriers of certain ideologies. Representations in the media are restricted by space and time limitations; journalists prioritise certain events, as well as certain people's perspectives or opinions, over others (Baker et al., 2013). This is especially relevant to the current conflict during which we have witnessed editorial bias and thinly veiled propaganda in newspaper reports. Newspaper reports can also be too general or too imprecise. Finally, on a deeper level, reports can be skewed or clustered towards certain events, which are deemed key to the participants or journalists, depending on their political affiliation. This can actually influence the course of protests, as reports influence- or not - the behaviour of people who read them,

depending on how aware the people are of other, less known, events. To illustrate, there was a lot of reporting about the murder of Dmytro Cherniavskiy, a member of Svoboda party and pro-Ukrainian protester, by a group of (presumably) pro-Russian protestors in Donetsk on 13 March 2014. This murder received much attention in the press and was considered as one of the pivotal events in the escalation to the internal war by many journalists and activists (Interview with Activist from Donetsk 27 07 2019). Yet, according to pro-Russian activists, the clamp down on by the National Guard on pro-Russian protestors in Mariupol on 16 April, when allegedly more than 40 people were killed, failed to receive any reporting on the scale of that of Cherniavskiy's murder.¹⁰⁴

Taking into account editorial biases in the press, this is how I dealt with them:

- An Internet newspaper was deemed to be “pro-government” (Yanukovich government) or strongly “pro-status quo”, if it did not report any significant protest action and if it reported too much entertainment and news about other countries, thus directing the readers’ attention away from the current problems. This meant that I had to either reject this newspaper or corroborate the evidence provided in the newspaper across with other newspapers;
- If there was too much focus on the protest action in a newspaper, and some of this reporting was of questionable quality (for example, *057* reported that one of the Euromaidan protest organisers, Dmytro Pylypets, was attacked and “12 knife wounds,” which is clearly lethal, was inflicted on him, but he survived)¹⁰⁵, then I had to corroborate across with other newspapers and Youtube videos to establish the veracity of claims;
- Locally-based journalists, such as those of *Novosti Donbassa*, command sufficient amount of detail to present a more nuanced picture, therefore their output was most trusted;
- A newspaper was judged as relatively impartial if it contained articles presenting different points of view; if the actions of the members of competing networks were reported proportionately to each other; if the newspaper did not shy away from dealing with technical matters, such as the budget. In this regard, *Status Quo* for Kharkiv was the best source;

¹⁰⁴ “Yuriy Lutsenko i storonniki federalizatsii v Donetske”, *YouTube*, 22 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OE6cStoFks>.

¹⁰⁵ “Ocherednoe napadenie na khar'kovskii “evromaidan”: Dmitrii Pilipets s nozhevymi raneniiami popal v “neotlozhku” (video)”, *057*, 25 December 2013.

- Some national newspapers, such as *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, published excellent, detailed articles on the Donbas;

Below I present a detailed account of the sources I have used for each of my cases.

4.1. Kharkiv

According to an article published in February 2014, Kharkiv was “a city of electronic means of mass communication,”¹⁰⁶ therefore it was logical for me to make use of local Internet newspapers. The list of these newspapers was taken from the article.¹⁰⁷ Below I present a table of the local, national, and international Internet newspapers I have used for protest cataloguing and qualitative process tracing for Kharkiv. I have included only those with the archive function.

Table 7. Kharkiv Internet newspapers

Source	Archive function	Dates	Language	Value	Used?
057	Yes	2013 - 2014	Russian	Good reporting on the Euromaidan	Yes
Vecherniy Kharkov	Yes	2013 - 2014	Russian	Enough detail; information on protests	Yes
Slobids'kiy Kraii	Yes	2013 - 2014	Ukrainian	Enough detail; a lot of information about the actions of and statements by the local elites	Yes

¹⁰⁶ Lilia Angorskaia, “Chto proishodit s khar'kovskoi pressoi i skol'ko v nei “dzhinsy”. Rezul'taty issledovaniia”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 20 February 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Khar'kovskie Izvestiia	Yes	2014	Russian		Yes, to a limited extent
Status Quo	Yes	2002 - 2014	Russian	Used for the chapter on the elites	Yes
Ukrayinska Pravda	Yes	2002 – 2014	Ukrainian	Reporting on local events is sparse	Yes
Dozor	Yes	2002 - 2014	Russian	Reporting on protests is sparse	Yes
Censor.net	Yes	2013 - 2014	Russian	Very anti-elite	Yes
Factiva	Yes	2014	English, German, Russian	Reporting by foreign journalists	Yes

Many Ukrainian Internet newspapers are characterised by either a strong pro-social movement (Euromaidan) or pro-elite bias. Therefore, each newspaper had to be considered in its own right. Thankfully, most of the basic data on protests, such as dates, demands, and organisations participating in protest, except for the number of protestors (discussed below), were mutually corroborated in the newspapers, which meant I did not have to triangulate data for each single protest event. As the Russian Spring went on, with some newspapers adopting a strongly anti-Russian stance, others being more faithful to good standards of reporting, and still others taking a pro-elite stance, these biases exacerbated. More concretely, it meant that some events were included, others omitted, and yet others were occupying a disproportionate amount of space. As a result, with some newspapers, I had to “trawl through” the entire archive to make sure I did not miss anything. Such “trawling through” process was also inevitable due to the inadequate nature of the search engines on some of the sites and the ubiquitous

“entertainment”, Russian¹⁰⁸ and, in some instances, prolific pro-Yanukovych,¹⁰⁹ news, which practically “drowned” the news pertinent for the research. Below I discuss each newspaper in turn.

To protest catalogue the Euromaidan phase and partially the Russian Spring phase in Kharkiv, I chiefly relied on the *057* Internet newspaper. The source espouses strong pro-Ukrainian views and is sceptical towards the local elites. It faithfully reported the Euromaidan protests but could have easily exaggerated the viciousness of the Anti-Maidan action in Kharkiv, such as the number of *titushki* (groups of young men) who attacked the Euromaidan protesters and the seriousness of their attacks. Violence against journalists might have been exaggerated too.¹¹⁰ In order to discredit the local elites, the actions by the police might have not been reported properly either. For example, it was reported by the *057* that on 2 December 2013 during the provocations and violence against the Euromaidan, no one was detained. Yet two other sources maintain that 4 people were detained.¹¹¹ More importantly, in the *057* the events of the Russian Spring were inadequately reported,¹¹² which necessitated corroboration with the evidence from other newspapers, social media platforms, and interviews. For example, I interviewed one of the activists in Kharkiv who confirmed to me that the aggressiveness of *titushki* was substantial. He described a great number of *titushki* (as many as 200) participating in the Anti-Maidan protest and pointed that many of them were bussed in from Russian regions adjacent to Kharkiv (Interview with the Activist in Kharkiv, 16 07 2019).

By contrast, *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, and *Slobids'kii Kraii* espoused strongly pro-elite¹¹³ and pro-status quo views, hence the vast majority of the local elites' statements made during both phases of political protests were taken from these sources. They also completely abstained from reporting on the Euromaidan in Kharkiv, although their reporting on the Russian Spring phase was quite satisfactory, with information on the number of protesters, organisations participating, their demands, and their repertoire of contention. I

¹⁰⁸ “V Sochi startovali pervye sorevnovaniia Olimpiady”, *Vechernii Kharkov*, 6 February 2014.

¹⁰⁹ “Kompromis potryben i vladi i opozytsii – holova Kharkivs'koi oblady”, *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 31 January 2014; “Kievskii politolog Yuri Gorodnenko: Nadezhda na Yugo-Vostok”, *Kharkovskie Izvestiia*, 28 January 2014.

¹¹⁰ “Marsh evromaidanovstev, vzryvy petard, izbitye zhurnalisty i tolpa “titushek” s bitami na ploshchadi: kak Kharkov perezhil Den' studenta (foto)”, *057*, 26 January 2014.

¹¹¹ “Sud vynes prigovor parniam, zapustivshim feierverki vo vremia mitinga na ploshchadi Svobody”, *Vechernii Kharkov*, 3 December 2013.

¹¹² The anti-Russian bias of *057* and somewhat dictatorial editorial policy can be gauged from the fact that the journalists banned commenting in March 2014.

¹¹³ “Kompromis potriben i vladi i opozytsii – holova Kharkivs'koi oblady”, *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 31 January 2014.

witnessed a veritable evolution of the reporting in these newspapers, thereby they gradually became “more serious”, eliminating entertainment, Russian and Soviet style what-aboutist world news almost completely by the time the Russian Spring reached its peak in early April.

With regard to the comments on news made by readers, I discovered during the early stage of the research that reading those comments yielded some useful local information, especially when people commented on what they saw and tried contradicting journalists. This was however very inconsistent and I came across such comments extremely rarely. The vast majority of the comments contained empty rhetoric (see the coding manual) and aggression (*srach*). Due to the extremely large amount of comments (on Colonel Cassad’s blog, comments could run up to 500 pages), I either sifted through the comments very quickly, read only the first couple of pages, or omitted them entirely.

Numbers of protesters could have often been exaggerated or underreported according to whichever bias – pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian – the newspaper exhibited.¹¹⁴ During the Russian Spring phase especially, pictures would often show a lot more people than was reported in the newspaper. An example of the deficient reporting on numbers can be seen from an article published on 25 November 2013 in *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, where it claimed that Kharkiv Euromaidan was attended by several hundred of people, while according to the organisers’ data, it was attended by 2000 people and according to the police, by 300.¹¹⁵

4.2 Donets’k

Below is the list of local and international Internet newspapers with the archival functions used for this research. I discuss each in turn.

¹¹⁴ See for example here LiveJournal user mikle1 attempting to count the numbers of protesters in Kharkiv and blaming the Ukrainian media for under-reporting <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/3869876.html>; <http://archive.is/il5M5>.

¹¹⁵ “Kharkovskii Evromaidan sobral neskol’ko soten chelovek”, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 25 November 2013.

Table 8. Donetsk Internet newspapers

Source	Archival function	Dates	Language	Value	Used?
Novosti Donbassa	Yes	2003 – 2014	Russian	Detailed; evidence on protests	Yes
Ostro.org	Yes	2014	Russian	Detailed; evidence on protests	Yes
Factiva	Yes	2014	English, Russian, German	Reporting by foreign journalists	Yes
Gorlovka.ua	Yes	2013 - 2014	Russian	Detailed; politics included; very good reporting on the actions and statements of the local elites	Yes
0629.com.ua (Mariupol)	Yes	2014	Russian	Detailed; politics included; very good reporting on the actions and statements of the local elites	Yes

Slavgorod.com.ua	Yes	2014	Russian	Detailed; politics included; very good reporting on the actions and statements of the local elites	Yes
062.ua	Yes	2014	Russian	Detailed; politics included; very good reporting on the actions and statements of the local elites	Yes

*Novosti Donbassa*¹¹⁶ and *Ostro.org*¹¹⁷, both (formerly) based in Donetsk, were my most extensively used sources of information on the local events in Donetsk and the region. For the Euromaidan phase, I relied heavily on *Novosti Donbassa*, as it contained most reports (granted the vast majority of the Euromaidan protests took place in Donetsk). Both sources were noted for their high level of journalistic standards but also for their pro-Ukrainian bias.¹¹⁸ *Novosti Donbassa* was indispensable for the Russian Spring equally.¹¹⁹ Despite its advantages, however, sometimes the *Novosti Donbassa* reporters did not treat the pro-Russian protests and the ensuing insurgency seriously enough. For example, when Donetsk governor Taruta's office was attacked in late March 2014, they cited a printed newspaper that offered a

¹¹⁶ <http://novosti.dn.ua/> .

¹¹⁷ <http://www.ostro.org/> .

¹¹⁸ *Novosti Donbassa* is financed by the Freedom House.

¹¹⁹ The editor in chief Oleksiy Matsuka, for example, says in this video that they went to all the anti-government meetings in Donetsk region from the beginning of the Maidan. See "V Donetsk'ke neskol'ko chelovek otkryli "Vostichnyi Front" – video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 February 2014.

truly Bakhtinian interpretation of the events as if they were a festival or a spectacle, with no lasting importance (the headline read “[In Taruta’s office] they’ve eaten all the candies”- “V offise ISD s’eli vse konfety”).¹²⁰

I have also used Factiva database of newspapers.¹²¹ Most of these sources were English language, although I set the search for German and Polish, as there were reporters in Donets’k from Germany and Poland, especially during the Russian Spring phase. Most specialised and trusted newspapers, such as the Reuters, BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics, Interfax-Ukraine, Financial Times, Unian, Ukrainian News Reports, Radio Free Europe, were consulted, while less specialised (some of which are perhaps more sensationalist) ones, such as the Daily Mail and various national newspapers (Iran, Vietnam, Philippines) were omitted. Some reports were quite detailed, although most did not contain a lot of detail on the meetings and activists. I had to triangulate the data with the reports from other newspapers, social media accounts and interviews.

I also used the local Internet newspapers for Mariupol, Slov”ians’k and Horlivka. All displayed pro-Ukrainian bias. All of these continue to function, as all these towns (or parts of them) were wrested from the insurgents’ control. The newspapers had better search engines, therefore I used keyword search “Euromaidan”, “Antimaidan” when doing search for the Euromaidan phase. I “leafed through” each day for the Russian Spring phase.

I continually encountered some interesting problems of purely linguistic nature which biased me against certain newspapers. Many headlines reporting on how the Euromaidan meetings were allegedly disrupted by the Anti-Maidan activists featured words such as “sorvali” (disrupted), “napali” (attacked) and the like. These words presuppose the use of serious violence against people. However, upon reading the articles, I discovered that “sorvali” simply meant a minor disruption via loud music or making noises while “napali” would often turn into “nearly attacked” (“chut’ bylo ne nabrosilis”), which meant that someone prevented violence, be it the police or the attackers themselves. This all indicated to me that some newspapers continually exploited tensions in the region to show the Anti-Maidan protesters in the worst possible

¹²⁰ “Donets’kie separatist prodolzhauiut razvlekat’sia – obzor pressy”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 March 2014.

¹²¹ <http://www.proquest.com/products-services/factiva.html>.

light. This is congruent with the injustice frame that circulated among pro-Russian protesters during the Russian spring phase, according to which they were unjustly slighted and portrayed in the worst possible light by Ukrainian journalists.

5. Social media

Social media presents a new platform for the expression of political views and beliefs. It also allows activists to disseminate information about protests (Gerbaudo, 2012). Inspired by this “cyber-optimism,” there has been much research recently on how social media is used to express political views, recruit people into protest movements, and even stage revolutions (for example, during the Arab Spring (Pearlman, 2013; Salem, S., 2015) and the Ukrainian Euromaidan revolution of 2013 – 2014 (Onuch, 2015a)). When it comes to protest participation, however, the relationship between social media and protest is highly context-bound. Some researchers, such as Steinert-Threlkeld et al. (Steinert-Threlkeld et al., 2015) conclude that social media use increases protest participation. Others, such as Olga Onuch argue that social media plays a lesser role in recruitment compared to that of close networks, such as family and friends (Onuch, 2015a).

This literature poses one key question: are there continuities between a person’s online and offline identities and behaviours? This is critical for my research, as movements and conflicts simply cannot take place online; they happen in the physical world. At the same time, the question whether there are continuities between people’s online and offline identities has been an object of some scholarly attention. For example, by interviewing individuals offline, Doutsou seeks to discover cases where online identities are congruous with offline identities (Doutsou, 2013). After Doutsou, as I discuss below, I originally intended to interview certain individuals in order to establish whether there was congruity between what they said online and what they did offline: for example, whether they said they were going to participate in the protest and followed this through or not.

Social media as a source for research has some distinct advantages, if used with caution. First, social media can cover local events which are not covered either in the local, national, or international press, such as activists’ meetings and people’s actions. Secondly, it has the potential to replace extensive interviews on the ground as a source of information about beliefs, expectations, and some actions in real

time. These remain valid because they were expressed at the time of the events in question, without the influence of hindsight, memory loss, or researcher impact, which *post hoc* face-to-face interviews are always hampered with, unless, of course, it has been determined with sufficient evidence that the user's or interlocutor's account is fake or the user did not post the comment in the first place (triangulation with interviews can help in this case). Thirdly, the Internet itself is a decentralised space, in contrast to newspapers, and there is little chance for the "editorial bias," unless there are moderators who systematically remove offensive, excessively controversial (such practices are present in the popular British online newspaper *Guardian*, for example) or "off-topic" content. Such practices are (fortunately or unfortunately) absent from the social media platforms I will use.

Now let us turn to the discussion of the specific social media websites popular in Ukraine. For the conflict in the Donbas the social media platform *Vkontakte* (Vk.com) has been crucial. Vk.com is the most widely used social media platform in Russia and Ukraine (Greene and Robertson, 2015).¹²² It was created by Pavel Durov in 2007.¹²³ Since then, it has registered 369 million accounts.¹²⁴ The platform was very popular in Ukraine. According to the research conducted in Ukraine in April 2014, 65% of people regularly used the Internet. Others did not use the Internet at all and the majority of these people were older than 70. The majority of those using the Internet used it to communicate via social media (61%). The most popular websites for this purpose were Vk.com, with 48% users, while Facebook was used only by 12%.¹²⁵ Despite the all-Ukrainian "boycott" of Vk.com announced on 27 March 2014, the platform did not stop functioning¹²⁶ and a great number of pro-Russian groups continued to proliferate.

In relation to the Donbas conflict, Vk.com has been popular with pro-Russian movements, such as Donetsk People's Republic, Donbass People's Militia, Anti-Maidan and their various local versions.¹²⁷ Such groups were created on Vk.com to recruit people into the protest movements, to help military volunteers enter Ukraine,¹²⁸ and to send humanitarian aid to the Donbas once the Ukrainian government

¹²² <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/vk.com>

¹²³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VK_\(social_networking\)#cite_note-alexa_traffic-8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VK_(social_networking)#cite_note-alexa_traffic-8)

¹²⁴ <https://vk.com/catalog.php>; <http://archive.is/Aeg1q>.

¹²⁵ "Kakie sotsseti predpochitaiut khar'kovchane", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 15 April 2014.

¹²⁶ "Ukraina – Rossiia. Boikot sotssetei", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 27 March 2014.

¹²⁷ In fact, I created a (very) long list of these. Most of them have been taken offline now.

¹²⁸ Gubarev was recruiting Russians into his movement via his Vk.com page. See <http://archive.is/f2H5D>.

launched the ATO in mid-April 2014. An article published as early as 3 March 2014 on *Censor.net* testified to the online recruitment attempts of Russians for political protests in the Donbas, Odesa and Kharkiv.¹²⁹ *Censor.net* reported that a group called “Grazhdanskaia Samooborona Ukrainy” (Civil Self-Defense of Ukraine) was created on Vk.com to recruit Russians and collect financial help “to fight for Ukraine”. In Donetsk, the extent of the proliferation of these groups in a very short period of time was truly astonishing. Gubarev’s Narodnoe Opolchenie run multiple pages of recruitment and is still running them. I found the most relevant groups and added myself to these groups as a participant to receive their updates.

There are significant differences between Facebook and Vk.com, which create certain problems for the researcher. In her research on Facebook, Doutsou writes that users are likely to reveal their real names, so there is congruence between the users’ online profiles and their offline identities (Doutsou, 2013). By contrast, on Vk.com there is much less user accountability and emphasis on real social ties, and there is more emphasis on the unbridled user self-expression. Therefore, it is not easy to verify whether the person behind a post or comment on Vk.com is real. That is, it is difficult to establish whether the person commenting or posting is of the gender, age, and in the location they state they are on their profile page. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

In addition to Vk.com, I also originally intended to use another social media platform, called Odnoklassniki (translated as “Classmates”), which was created later than Vk.com and caters primarily to the older generations (40+) in Ukraine and Russia. Odnoklassniki users seem to be more concerned with building social connections, especially with people they know, and there is less emphasis on commenting. In terms of its functionality, this platform is more limited, as I discuss below.

Using these two social media platforms presents certain issues when it comes to building a representative sample. Vk.com tends to be used by younger people (16 – 30), while Odnoklassniki is more popular among the older population. In fact, according to an academic studying the conflict, Odnoklassniki has a larger community of both pro-Russian sympathisers and insurgents of different ages

¹²⁹“V sotsetsiakh aktivno verbuiut rossiian dlia aksii na Donbasse, v Odesse i v Khar’kove”, *Censor.net*, 3 March 2014.

than does Vk.com (Personal communication 10 03 2017). The best way to overcome the issue of representativeness is to triangulate across the social media platforms to achieve greater representativeness of the sample. For example, one can search for the same groups, such as Narodnoe Opolchenie Donbassa across the platforms, and establish connections with their participants. This is hampered by the limited functionality of Odnoklassniki, thereby it is not possible to search for participants from certain locations from the group lists. One possible strategy to overcome this problem would be to look at the pictures of the participants and identify those who are linked to the DNR in some way (for example, some people put DNR's coat of arms or themselves in a uniform on their profile pictures).

For the Russian Spring phase of research, I used the archival function called "wall" on Vk.com. Due to the sheer volume of posts in some groups that might have taken weeks or months to go through and because the vast majority of these posts presented no value to the research, I sometimes did a word search using the words "miting" (meeting), "Evromaidan," and "Antimaidan". The number of groups in Kharkiv was more limited than in Donetsk region; the archives of these groups often began functioning only with the beginning of the Russian Spring; the number of posts on their walls was often limited. Therefore, for some groups, I could afford taking time to go through each post. Many groups in Kharkiv functioned for a limited period of time and then were suppressed. Much of the data, sadly, became unavailable as a result.

The amount of comments on the websites where moderation was liberal (057 up to a point, *Censor.net*, and particularly *LiveJournal* and Vk.com) was astonishing, sometimes running up to 500 pages. By mid-March, the journalists from 057 had to disable the commenting function because of a steady stream of comments invoking slaughter. According to them, a great number of these comments were made from computers with Russian IP addresses.¹³⁰

At the early stage of this research, I compiled an exhaustive list of the archived walls of the early Anti-Maidan, pro-federal and pro-Russian movements in Donetsk and Kharkiv. The list was compiled using primarily snowball sampling, that is I looked for a movement's vk.com page when it was referred to in an academic or newspaper article or its name figured on another movement's or user's Vk.com page.

¹³⁰ "057 zakryli vozmozhnost' kommentirovat' Novosti, chtoby ne razzhigat' konflikty", 057, 15 March 2014.

For a small number of movements, archived walls did not exist due to the limited functionality or content deletion. Some “movements”, such as the “Antimaidan”, were just news outlets, without any details on protest, recruitment practices or demands of protesters and offline actions. I omitted them. Later on, I discovered that groups advocating unity with Russia, such as “Federalisation of Ukraine. Unity With Russia”¹³¹ or “Donbass. Referendum. Unity with Russia,”¹³² were deleted.

For the Euromaidan phase, I used the walls of the numerous Anti-Maidan groups,¹³³ although many turned out to be mostly news outlets. To find these, I did word search for “Evromaidan”, “Antimaidan”, “miting”, “aktsiya”, “Gorlovka”, “Mariupol” and “Slavyansk”. I have also used two dedicated Anti-Maidan websites.¹³⁴ I have also used the walls of the Donetsk Republic movement and the Russian Bloc party, which contained constructive posts and comments and not that many news items.

I used the Narodnoe Opolchenie Donbassa’s (Donbass People’s Self-Defence) (Pavel Gubarev¹³⁵) wall¹³⁶ extensively for this research. It helped me chart the relatively short evolution of the movement and find out about its organisation, recruitment practices, and, more importantly, its attitude towards the local elites. The wall contained comments providing precious local knowledge and detailing people’s attitudes and reactions to the unfolding events. Many comments were highly constructive and useful for the research purposes, especially during the early phase of the Russian Spring. Due to the high popularity of the movement, by 3 March, its posts attracted more than 2 thousand likes and more than two thousand comments. By 28 February 2017, the number of subscribers was 116,082. I was mindful that the wall could have been gradually infiltrated by Russia-based sofa clickactivists (“divannye voiska”) and FSB

¹³¹ <https://vk.com/wall-69306360?own=1&offset=700>.

¹³² <https://vk.com/wall-69095455?own=1&offset=640>.

¹³³ <https://vk.com/wall-68705740?offset=50920&own=1>; <http://archive.is/Mix2Q>; <https://vk.com/wall-41232698?offset=84700&own=1>; <http://archive.is/1Wtdf>; <https://vk.com/wall-65540286?offset=9900&own=1>; <http://archive.is/V7H04>; <https://vk.com/wall-65409107?offset=3180>; <http://archive.is/scaJH>; https://vk.com/wall-68705740_2342; <http://archive.is/nyylQ>; <https://vk.com/wall-68881228?offset=3940>; <http://archive.is/iMsam>; https://vk.com/wall-65250330_938?f=replies; <http://archive.is/lrsRm>; <https://vk.com/antimaydan>; <http://archive.is/PG22t>; <https://vk.com/wall-63378961?offset=2500>; <http://archive.is/5kzLS>; <https://vk.com/wall-65186358?offset=10720&own=1>; <http://archive.is/OMsYp>.

¹³⁴ http://antimaydan.info/antimajdan_v_harkove.html; <http://archive.is/qC0rJ>; <http://amdn.news/>; <http://archive.is/41cBx>.

¹³⁵ Pavel Gubarev (referred variously in the mainstream English-speaking media as Hubaryev / Hubarev) was proclaimed people’s governor of Donetsk region on 1 March.

¹³⁶ <https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=32400&own=1>; <http://archive.is/RDLN>.

agents. This could be detected by observing the lack of local data and presence of empty rhetoric in the comments (see the coding manual).

LiveJournal accounts¹³⁷ were equally indispensable for the triangulation practice, especially during the Russian Spring phase. *LiveJournal* (ZHZZH) blogs I have used for this research are run by people with a wide variety of views, from the strongly anti-Russian and anti-DNR “frankenstein” to adamantly pro-Russian Colonel Cassad and donbassrus user. The most prolific reporters were frankenstein and Cassad, providing reports on the local events every day. They also posted pictures and videos, and a few comments from fellow bloggers on their posts led me to other bloggers and even Vk.com pages and movements. This level of local reporting was hard to obtain from newspaper reports. Bloggers sometimes commented on the behaviour of the local elites but most of their comments were on movements. Cassad’s blog was more limited in that he was highly selective in his reporting of events (for example, he reported that the Party of Regions was absent during the pro-Russian mobilisation phase in early March, while Gubarev complained that the Party was too active in the mobilisation process). He could not have possibly known much about the local events in Donetsk due to his residence in Sevastopol. From late January onwards, bloggers attempted to recruit people online for the pro-Russian movements.¹³⁸

6. YouTube videos

For Kharkiv, Youtube videos were of limited value as most of the videos were deleted and the streaming service stopped being available in 2014, straight after the events.¹³⁹ I used YouTube videos to find out what organisations were present at the protest events (usually by looking at their flags), who instigated violent episodes, and whether the demands of protesters changed. For the demands, however,

¹³⁷ The list includes: <http://frankenstein.livejournal.com/>; <http://archive.is/LJWIA>; <http://colonelcassad.livejournal.com>; <http://archive.is/xSgQP>; <http://donbassrus.livejournal.com/>; <http://archive.is/Ef8sl>; <http://alexlotov.livejournal.com/581239.html>; <http://archive.is/u4z5I>; <http://aloban75.livejournal.com/595222.html>; <http://archive.is/7XMzJ>; <http://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/2014/02/23/>; <http://archive.is/hOH03>; <http://pauluskp.livejournal.com/497706.html>; <http://archive.is/5g2pG>; <http://nikitatimka.livejournal.com/>; <http://archive.is/3qDQU>; <http://lunin812.livejournal.com/267637.html>; <http://archive.is/mHyw7>; <http://andreyvadja.livejournal.com/341668.html>; <http://archive.is/g0bvH>; <http://putnik1.livejournal.com>; <http://archive.is/6diFy>; <http://yadocent.livejournal.com/>; <http://archive.is/fBZuF>.

¹³⁸ <https://yadocent.livejournal.com/531512.html>; <http://archive.is/LqHJp>.

¹³⁹ <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/kharkov-antimaidan>; <http://archive.is/od1fL>.

text based resources were more useful. Videos were more extensively used for the Russian Spring phase than for the Euromaidan phase.

Many videos from Donetsk were deleted shortly after the end of the Russian Spring. I used these videos in a similar fashion to how I used videos for Kharkiv – to corroborate some evidence, such as who participated in the meetings, who perpetrated the violence, and what demands were made. The advantages of using YouTube videos are that some of these can be good substitutes for interviews. For example, there was a string of videos providing a unique insider view of the early DNR meetings in April in the captured regional administration building in Donetsk.¹⁴⁰ One can also observe the interaction among people, activists and elites, as well as the police on some of the videos. The disadvantages were the highly selective nature of the videos location-wise, little reportage from locations, such as Horlivka and Sloviansk, except after the beginning of the armed phase of the conflict in April 2014.

7. Triangulation practice

As I went along looking at the data, I gradually discovered how to do triangulation.

1. A statement by an elite member should be confirmed with the elite member via an interview, if possible. I was able to do this with Elite Member 1 who provided me with some brief comments on several of his public statements in an email. I contacted Oleksandr Feldman from Kharkiv and the director of Kharkiv regional finance department Tetiana Takuesheva via Facebook but, unfortunately, they did not engage.
2. The content of a statement made by a political scientist has to be discussed with him or her.
3. A statement made in the press about an official document, such as the Constitution, should be cross-checked with the content on the Rada website and, when necessary, with the Ministry of Finance's archived website. I have also been advised to contact the World Bank and Ukrainian Commerce Chamber to clarify my understanding of certain figures, particularly in relation to the regional budgets.

¹⁴⁰ "Zasedanie Pravitel'stva Donetskoi Narodnoi Respubliki", *YouTube*, 12 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33idnvMcIWU>

4. Claims made on Vk.com had to be corroborated with claims in newspapers and, where possible, with activists themselves, other Vk.com posts, and with videos.
5. The reports in *Novosti Donbassa* had to be triangulated with the posts on Vk.com.
6. Activist testimony had to be cross-checked with other activists' testimony, newspaper reports and plain logic.
7. In line with my original intention to interview ordinary people, I attempted to confirm the statements made on social media with those who made those statements. I discuss below the problems I came across.

8. Interviews, emotional trauma, and ethical considerations

I originally intended to conduct extensive interviews with ordinary people living in Donetsk and Kharkiv via social media. I have developed several methods of getting access to these people and had some successes at the different stages of this project. As I explain below, I then decided not to interview them. As my theories and understanding of the data improved, at the latter stage of this project, I made a decision to interview local elites, political scientists, commentators, and activists in Kharkiv and Donetsk.

There are two types of interviews that can be used for this project: semi-structured and episodic. As the name suggests, semi-structured interviews are “conversations with a purpose,” in that they are centred around the list of questions a researcher has drawn up. Semi-structured interviews are guided by the research questions and the empirical data derived from other sources. Episodic interviewing is interviewing around a situation or an event rather than with an aim to elicit a continuous narrative. Both episodic interviews and semi-structured interviews are guided by questions, but at the same time are flexible enough to allow interviewers to gauge interviewees' beliefs and experiences that go beyond pre-defined questions. The theoretical background of studies using both semi-structured and episodic interviews is mainly the analysis of subjective views, activities and experiences (Flick, 2014).

Interviews can be done concurrently or after a significant amount of data has been collected from other sources, so I have an understanding of what kind of questions to ask my interviewees. My main research questions guide the interview questions but do not replicate them exactly. Questions asked at interviews would need to be adapted, their language simplified, and technical language and jargon removed, so the

participants can understand the questions. For example, I did not use the word “mobilisation” (“*mobilizatsiya*”) in interviews in Russian or Ukrainian, because in these languages it means military mobilisation rather than mobilisation for political protest.

The several ordinary participants in the pro-federal protest in Kharkiv were accessed in the following way. I read all the comments made by the people on the few extant archived walls for Kharkiv’s pro-federal and pro-Russian groups on Vkontakte. I then selected the profiles of the people who made the most constructive comments (see the coding manual) and went on their profile pages. I assessed the profile pages as to their quality and the likelihood that the commentator was indeed a Kharkivite. I then contacted the commentator and asked him – there were two men who agreed to be interviewed – the questions that interested me.

I encountered several ethical issues during this process. As the war in the Donbas is still going on, most importantly, I did not want to inflict an emotional trauma on the ordinary people. As someone who lives in relative safety in London, I thought it would be very unfair and even wanton to ask them uncomfortable questions. At the early stage of my project, in August 2014, I happened to travel on a train to Murmansk with a refugee woman from Donetsk. My mother and I were deeply affected by her story and her extremely haggard and worn-out appearance. The woman recalled her experience of being bombed in her apartment flat. We were, therefore, careful not to ask too many questions. Later on, when I was trawling through Odnoklassniki looking for the Russian Spring protest participants, I came across a woman who presented as a refugee from Donetsk living in Kharkiv. When I invited her to participate in an interview, she responded in a very emotional way and sent me a long message detailing her experiences of being a refugee from Donetsk. She said her husband was shot. She blamed the EU and “also England” for putting pressure on Ukraine and causing the conflict. This affected me too and from then on, I decided not to interview ordinary people. At different stages of this project, I came across several men on Vkontakte, who refused to participate in an interview because they were afraid for their safety. I was told not to interview activists because they rarely provide “killer insight”. However, in the end, I decided to interview activists because I needed to understand the inner dynamics of the movements they led. In my interviews with the three activists from Kharkiv, I did come across claims that had to be

triangulated with newspaper reports, testimony by other activists, and information on social media. Prior to conducting these interviews, I made sure I prepared very thoroughly so I asked the most relevant questions. My main objectives were to find out the aims of the movements, why they failed, the role of the local elites in the protest, and whether the organisers were involved in any political protest prior to 2014.

I was fortunate to interview two Russian Spring protest organisers in Kharkiv. Luckily for me, both organisers turned out to be very engaging, all the geographical and, above all, ideological, barriers notwithstanding. I learnt about them from Internet newspapers and a blog. I must say getting to interview them was a difficult process that took several months. I used several social media platforms to get access to them. With the second protest organiser, I trawled through his entire friends and guests list on his blog, to look for anyone who seem to have participated in or organised protests. I checked specifically for people who reside or used to reside in Ukraine (and not, say, Russia or Russian regions) and who had been posting on their blogs recently. I wrote messages to them inviting them to participate in an interview. I got two responses from two people, who very helpfully directed me to the second protest organiser saying that he is the authority on the subject. I then contacted him and was able to ask all the questions that interested me.

9. Conclusion

In summary, I have outlined the main methods and the implications of the use of different sources in this project. My research project complies fully with the leading definitions of case studies in that I look at the factors that have been missing in the empirical literature on the Donbas conflict - the local elites and activists. I have also discussed the rationale behind bounding the case study to Kharkiv city and Donetsk region, as they warrant the use of a “most similar systems design”. I have assessed critically the pitfalls of using case studies and the mixed methods research design. The mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods allows the researcher to consider the question posed in the necessary depth and breadth, as I have shown. I have also discussed the main qualitative method used in the study, that is process tracing, as well as the concept of causal mechanism. Process tracing allows the researcher to answer the question in exhaustive detail and is theoretically eclectic, which aids theory development. Process tracing is particularly suitable for accounting for and explaining a complex phenomenon, such as war, which I have

also discussed. Determining a critical juncture is part and parcel of using process tracing, which has also figured in the discussion. I then proceeded by discussing protest cataloguing as the main quantitative method used in the study. I then demonstrated the merits of doing the Internet research and discussed the main newspaper sources I have used for the project. I then considered the advantages and disadvantages of using social media, Youtube videos and interviews, and outlined my triangulation practice.

Chapter 3: Protest and Violence in Kharkiv and Donetsk, 2003 – 2014

1. Introduction

In this chapter I test the first hypothesis developed in the theoretical introduction to the study. To restate the hypothesis, *the more intense the protest and protest violence in the region, the more likely it is to become the site of a violent conflict (H1)*. I demonstrate empirically that in both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region the protests in late 2013 – early 2014 were widespread and often violent. Moreover, the overall protest potential in Kharkiv city was higher than in the entire Donetsk region in the years prior to the Euromaidan. However, despite the similarities between the 2013 – 2014 protest waves in the regions, we observe no war outcome in Kharkiv. I therefore conclude that the intensity of protest and the degree of protest violence do not explain the incidence of war in Ukraine.

In some theoretical literature on escalation it is found that widespread demonstrations and strikes often lead to an internal war. Such dynamics have been observed in the lead-up to the civil wars in Guatemala (1960-96), Nicaragua (1978-90), and El Salvador (1981-92) (Almeida, 2008; Brockett, 2005; Demirel-Pegg, 2014, 304; Lichbach et al., 2003). Using the example of the civil war in Nicaragua, Lichbach et al. argue that a civil war starts when more people become involved in contention and when the country becomes ungovernable. To put it simply, the greater the intensity of protest and the greater the protest violence, the harder it is to control the outcomes. Admittedly, some countries which were on the verge of a civil war due to their high protest potential and the intensity of protest, such as Macedonia and Kenya, did not have a civil war (Shesterinina, 2014, 127).

The history and identity approach to the Donbas conflict pays close attention to the widespread dissatisfaction of the Donbas' residents with the new government's policies and the systematic and often violent protest that ensued in the Donbas as a result (Giuliano, 2015a; Kudelia, 2014a; Loshkarev and Sushentsov, 2016; Matveeva, 2016; Nicoara and White, 2016; Sakwa, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). Scholars within this approach link this protest with the region's history and the peculiar political beliefs held by its residents (A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). The broader literature on emotions and politics demonstrates how people engage in protest, protest violence and conflict as a result of

experiencing the emotions of different valence (fear or anger) (Pearlman, 2013; Petersen, 2011). These emotions are intersubjective experiences arising from shared historical and cultural conditions or “emotional climates” (Baele et al., 2016; Bar-Tal et al., 2007). It can be argued, therefore, that areas characterised by similar “emotional climates” are predisposed to similar protest dynamics and, by extension, to similar conflict outcomes. The “foreign actors” approach to the conflict attributes the responsibility for the Donbas conflict to the actions of Russian non-state and state actors, who acted with the connivance of some local actors (Czuperski et al., 2015; Mitrokhin, 2014; Sutyagin, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). What is left to be explained, however, is why these actors chose to start the insurgency in one region rather than the other.

In this chapter, I demonstrate through the empirical analysis that protest intensity and the degree of protest violence should not be automatically linked with armed conflict outcomes. More specifically, through protest cataloguing and the analysis of the dynamics of protest, I first demonstrate that historically Kharkiv city had greater general protest potential than the entire Donetsk region. This predisposed the region to further political instability. I also demonstrate that during the Euromaidan and Russian Spring protest waves, protest intensity and protest violence were similar in both regions. Kharkiv showed a greater propensity to protest violence during the Euromaidan protest phase. Such similarities point to the theoretically important conclusion that the people in both regions were animated by similar emotions. Moreover, both regions could have potentially become sites of an armed conflict if the Russian non-state actors were guided by these protest dynamics when choosing where to start the insurgency. Ultimately, however, as I demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, it is not the intensity of protest and protest violence per se that are responsible for conflict outcomes but the political opportunities opened by the local elites for radical activists and how these activists used political opportunities.

2. General protest potential in both regions compared

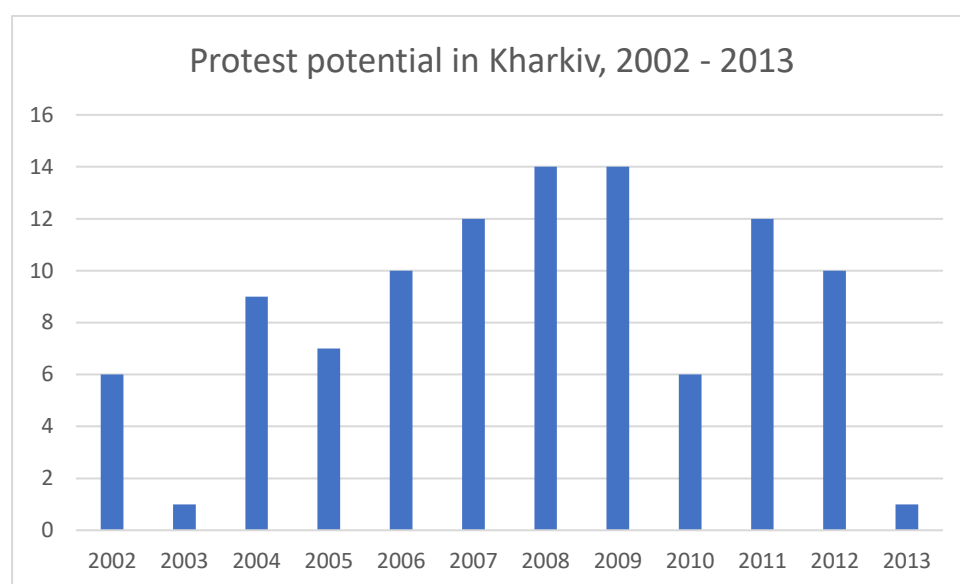
2.1. Kharkiv

Protest cataloguing for the years 2002 to 2013 highlights several patterns of protest in Kharkiv city.

Overall, it indicates that political protest potential was greater in Kharkiv city than in the entire Donetsk

region. Here I have catalogued all political protest, meetings and pickets¹⁴¹ reported in the regional internet newspaper *Status Quo*; I have also included some socio-economic protests that threatened to dislodge the local elites. These included protests around the issues of land sale and the rise in the prices of public utilities initiated by the mayor Dobkin. If a protest was reported as “continuous” (“bessrochnyi”), I catalogued it when it was reported. All protests took place in the city of Kharkiv, with no protests in the neighbouring towns or villages reported.

Table 9. General protest potential in Kharkiv, 2002 - 2013



Source: Status Quo¹⁴²

In total, there were 112 separate political protests from 2002 to November 2013. Most of these protests were organised by political parties, which underscores, firstly, the city’s highly challenging political environment for the local elites and, secondly, the presence of competing networks, that is the city’s “diffused patronage” nature. At least 10 of these protests were organised by more than three political

¹⁴¹ Here are some examples of demands that I have coded as “political”: anti-Kuchma, fair elections, dismiss Dobkin and Kernes, dismiss Avakov, better budget for Kharkiv, make Russian a regional language, support Yanukovych/Yushchenko, Dobkin to fulfil his election promises. I have excluded the regular 1 May meetings organised by the Communist Party across the entire Ukraine. I averaged “several thousand” (“neskolko tysyach”) to 5000; “several hundreds” (“neskol’ko sotn”) – to 500.

¹⁴² This is a serious underestimate of the protest potential in Kharkiv city. According to *Status Quo* journalists, there were around 100 meetings and pickets in the Kharkiv region in 2010. Those were mostly socio-economic meetings and pickets, such as protests of workers at state-owned enterprises demanding to cancel wage arrears and protests around the building of the road in Gorky Park in Central Kharkiv.

parties, which indicates a vibrant political culture in the city. For example, on 17 September 2002, the Communist Party of Ukraine protested together with 9 other parties (Socialist party, BYUT, Sobor, Ukrainian Nationalist Party, Liberal-Democratic party, Republican Christian party, “Reforms and Order” party, Kharkiv committee “for Truth”) against Kuchma. The number of protestors reached 10 thousand on that day. On 3 and 16 October 2006, after the Party of Regions-dominated regional council voted no-confidence in the governor Arsen Avakov (the representative of Our Ukraine), 6 parties conducted a meeting to support the vote, while 5 other parties demanded the resignation of Avakov’s antagonist, the mayor Dobkin.

Certain political parties, such as the Communist Party and the small but vocal opposition party Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYUT), developed a stable and strong presence in the city’s protest politics. In this period, BYUT held at least 19 protests and meetings, with more protests in the years 2007 – 2009, when there was a tangible possibility of their antagonists, the city council secretary Hennadiy Kernes and the city mayor Mykhailo Dobkin, being dismissed from their posts. The protests organised by BYUT numbered 5,000 people at most. By contrast, out of 112 protests I have catalogued, Kharkiv’s dominant party, the Party of Regions, organised only 15. The party mustered the greatest number of protestors (50,000) on 26 November 2004, during the Orange Revolution.

The Communist Party of Ukraine, which became instrumental in protest organisation in spring of 2014 (Protest Organiser 1 interview 24 09 2018; Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018), organised 18 protests between 2002 and 2013, excluding the regular 1 and 9 May demonstrations. An anti-NATO protest in February 2008 organised by the party reportedly numbered 8000 people, the highest number of protestors over these years. It participated in many other meetings and protests organised by fellow parties and put forward a stable assortment of wide-ranging socio-economic and socio-political demands. For example, during the meeting on 7 November 2006, the party demanded “general political and local self-government reform, greater state support to agricultural enterprises, and accessible education.”¹⁴³

¹⁴³ “Predstaviteli khar’kovskikh organizatsii KPU proveli miting na pl. Svobody v Kharkove po sluchaiu 89-ii gorovshchiny Oktyabr’skoi revoliutsii”, *Status Quo*, 7 November 2006.

Smaller, openly pro-Russian parties, such as the Russian Bloc, organised 7 protests in total, usually held together with other small parties, such as Slobids'kiy Vybor (Kharkiv Region's Choice); most of the time, their protests gathered no more than 50 people. For example, in April 2003, the Russian Bloc and Hennadiy Makarov, who later became involved in the pro-federal protest in March – April 2014, held a meeting demanding Russian to become the official language in the region.¹⁴⁴ The number of protests and meetings organised by these smaller parties and the number of attendees were still higher than those in Donetsk.

The geographic location and wide outreach of political protests and meetings in Kharkiv support the argument that the region became a place where a variety of networks competed with each other and the general political environment was highly challenging for the local elites. The vast majority of protests tended to take place in central Kharkiv, with others embracing a wide variety of other locations. 72 out of 112 separate protests took place on the Freedom Square, right in the centre of Kharkiv and next to the regional administration building (HOGA). Out of these, 37 were pickets of the HOGA. Significant blocking of the central Sumska street occurred during a pro-Yushchenko march on 24 November 2004, when the protest numbered between 10 thousand and 70 thousand people, according to different estimates.¹⁴⁵ Otherwise, blocking of streets occurred rarely. There were 36 protests in other locations, such as the Constitution Square, where the city council building is located; and next to the Security Service of Ukraine building (SBU) and Kyiv district court buildings.

2.2. Donetsk

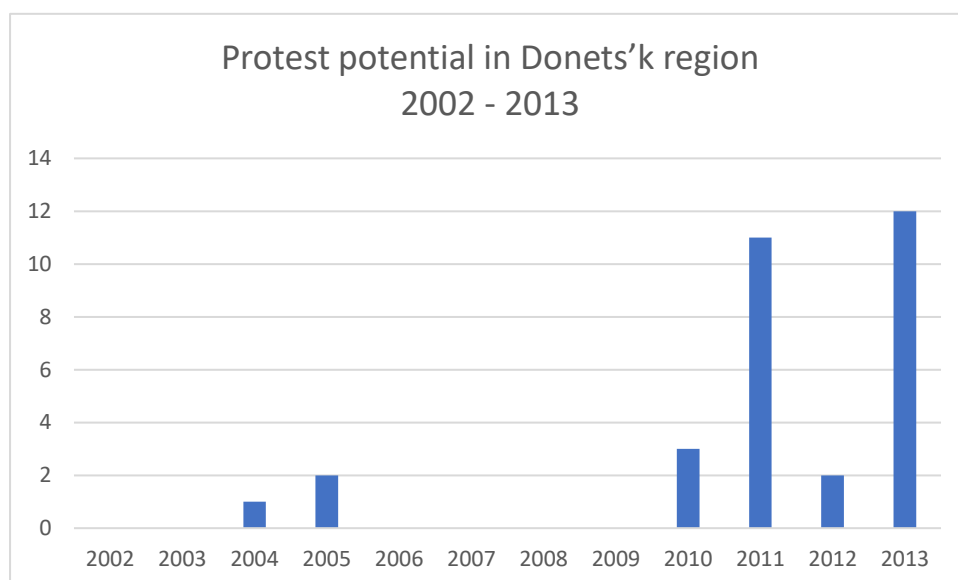
In the entire Donetsk region, political protest potential was weaker than in Kharkiv city. Such weak protest potential was partially the result of the Party of Regions' political monopoly in the region but could also have been the result of political apathy (Kudelia, 2014d, 24). I have catalogued 50 political protests from the years 2002 to 2013, including marches and meetings organised by small radical

¹⁴⁴ "Russkii Blok budet piketirovat' zdanie gorsovetu v den' aprel'skoi sessii", *Status Quo*, April 2003.

¹⁴⁵ "Miting Protestu po povodu fal'sifikatsii rezultatov vtorogo tura vyborov proshel 23 noyabrya", *Status Quo*, 24 November 2004.

organisations such as Donetsk Republic and the regular protests held by the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (or Natalya Vitrenko's Bloc) (PSPU) on anti-NATO and anti-Yushchenko themes.

Table 10. General protest potential in Donetsk's region, 2002 - 2013



Source: *Novosti Donbassa*

To get an understanding of just how unpopular political protest was in Donetsk's region, one should consider that a protest conducted on 15 October 2010 by Serhiy Tihipko's party "Strong Ukraine" in Donetsk mustered around 400 participants and was described as "the most numerous meeting in Donetsk region for the past two years".¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the biggest protest since 2004, with around 1500 protestors, held on 3 November 2011, can be characterised as mostly socio-economic, demanding the government's reconsideration of its policies on subsidies and putting forward an admixture of not very well articulated political demands.¹⁴⁷ In two investigative articles on all meetings and protests in Horlivka and Mariupol published on *Novosti Donbassa*, my main source for protest cataloguing, the journalists estimated 10 protests of all types in Horlivka from March 2010 to September 2011, numbering no more than 400 people.¹⁴⁸ There were 12 protests in Mariupol from April 2010 to October 2011, numbering up

¹⁴⁶ "V Donetsk'ke "Sil'naia Ukraina" ustroila rekordnuiu aktsiyu protesta foto", *Novosti Donbassa*, 15 October 2010.

¹⁴⁷ Aleksei Matsuka, "Miting za spinoi", *Novosti Donbassa*, 03 November 2011.

¹⁴⁸ Vitaly Ovcharenko, "Donbass protestuet. Gorlovka", *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 October 2011.

to 500 people.¹⁴⁹ The authors of the article categorised these protests as “social” (for example, those held by pensioners and by parents against the closures of schools); “political,” mounted against the regional governor’s policies or those organised by political parties such as PSPU and Communists; and the so-called “civic” protests, against rising public utility prices, organised by political parties such as Bat’kivshchina (Yulia Tymoshenko’s party).

Overall, a great number of protests in Donetsk region put forward mostly socio-economic demands, such as the timely payment of pensions and the resumption of subsidies.¹⁵⁰ Political protests were comparatively rare. They were conducted by small unpopular parties, such as Progressive Socialists, and their demands remained the same over the years: radical change in the government policies towards the EU and NATO, revision of the language policy, and protection of the Russian language.

Paradoxically, once Yanukovich became President, political protest potential in Donetsk region increased dramatically (Interview with Journalist 1, 19 07 2019; Activist from Donetsk interview 27 07 2019). Yet, these protests were conducted mostly by “pro-status quo” parties. The year 2013 was punctured with “anti-fascist” protests conducted by the Communist Party and the Party of Regions across the region. The previous two years witnessed the protests by the Chernobyl Victims’ Union, demanding the resumption of subsidies to the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster living in Donetsk region. The Chernobyl victims’ protests were directed against the regional administration and became the most politically resonant protests. They were also the most violent: one protest ended with the ransacking of the Pension Fund building; another with the death of one person; the local elites periodically issued threats to use force against the protestors.¹⁵¹ According to Journalist 1, the protests that involved ordinary people were directed against the local elites who were siphoning off subsidies intended for the local population. Journalist 1 puts it this way: “On the official documents, the people were shown gigantic numbers [of subsidies] but this money failed to reach them” (Interview 19 07 2019).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. ; Vitaly Ovcharenko, “Donbass protestuet. Mariupol”, 31 October 2011.

¹⁵⁰ Aleksei Matsuka, “Yanukovich teriaet Donbass”, *Novosti Donbassai*, 22 March 2011.

¹⁵¹ Vladimir Ishchenko, “Khronika protivostoiania v Donets’ke: kak absurdnoe ubezhdenie vlasti ubilo cheloveka. Spetsial’nyi obzor”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 30 November 2011.

The regions therefore differed in their overall protest potential, which generates a theoretical expectation that Kharkiv city was predisposed to greater political destabilisation and a potential conflict in spring 2014. In contrast, general protest potential was weak in Donetsk region as compared to Kharkiv city. Political protests there were comparatively rare and, in the years following the Orange Revolution, protesters put forward an assortment of nearly unchanging anti-Yushchenko and anti-NATO demands. Socio-economic protests were more frequent. Under Yanukovich's presidency, both socio-economic and political protests in Donetsk region intensified, with many being conducted by the Party of Regions. Therefore, this brief overview of the general protest potential in both regions allows us to conclude that greater protest potential should not be associated with a greater escalatory potential for war.

3. Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan protest waves in Kharkiv

Kharkiv's Euromaidan started on 24 November 2013 on Taras Shevchenko Square. The movement quickly gained momentum, and by 30 November, it numbered at least 2,000 participants, which made it one of the largest Euromaidan movements in the south-east. It was certainly larger than the Euromaidan in Donetsk.¹⁵² The protestors gathered every day,¹⁵³ only to stop briefly in late January, due to the increasing attacks. The demands of Kharkiv's Euromaidan protestors were consistent with those in Kyiv: they first protested against Yanukovich's refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement and then demanded his resignation (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019).¹⁵⁴

Anti-Maidan emerged in Kharkiv¹⁵⁵ as a reaction of some local people, Kharkiv's top elites, the Party of Regions' members, and some other political parties and organisations to the Euromaidan. It was not a unified movement but rather a collection of individuals and organisations who professed their support for the course taken by President Yanukovich and were critical and fearful of the events occurring on the Maidan in Kyiv, especially when those events took a violent turn in late January 2014.

¹⁵² "Po Ukraine prokatilas' volna Evromaidanov: vo L'vove vyshlo 10,000 Foto", *Censor.net*, 23 November 2013.

¹⁵³ "Kak Kharkovchane k evromitingam priobshchalis", *Vechernii Khar'kov*, 25 November 2013.

¹⁵⁴ "Kharkovskii Evromaidan sobral neskol'ko soten chelovek", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 25 November 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Note that Anti-Maidan existed prior to the Euromaidan as primarily an Internet movement (Filippova, O., 2009). Here I refer to this specific Anti-Maidan that rose in reaction to the Euromaidan.

Anti-Maidan rallies were comparatively few. In fact, using opposition (*057*), neutral (*Slobids'kyy Krai*), and pro-elite Internet newspapers (*Izvestiia*), I was able to catalogue only 10 distinct (that is not “continuous” or “bessrochnye”) Anti-Maidan rallies, compared to 24 Euromaidan rallies, in Kharkiv city. Anti-Maidan rallies can be divided into three types: those organised by the local elites, which were the most numerous and most well attended (on this below); those organised by the Communist Party (which I was unable to catalogue systematically, due to the closure of the Communist Party’s online archive and the poor reporting on these rallies in all of my sources); and those organised by local Anti-Maidan organisations.

These Anti-Maidan rallies were not violent. Instead, the systematic and increasingly more violent attacks on the Euromaidan were perpetrated by groups of young people (*titushki*), most of whom did not seem to belong to any political parties. Yet, these violent attacks on Euromaidan protestors took centre stage in the media reports on Kharkiv’s Euromaidan¹⁵⁶ and predisposed the region to further violence. I interviewed one of the activists in Kharkiv who confirmed to me that the aggressiveness of *titushki* was substantial. He described a great number of *titushki* (as many as 200), participating in the Anti-Maidan protest and pointed that many of them were bussed in from Russian regions adjacent to Kharkiv. He put it this way: “I often saw them in small groups, always with a girl... There were as many as 200 of them sometimes... Very aggressive... They could have beaten us with their bats” (Interview 16 07 2019).

Thus, in the section that follows, I focus on the “titushki”. These were groups of athletically built young men, reportedly hired by both the government and opposition¹⁵⁷ to disperse Euromaidan protests. They were named after Vadym Titushko, a professional athlete, who was hired to and eventually prosecuted for attacking journalists in Bela Tserkva, near Kyiv, in May 2013 (Interview with Activist in Kharkiv, 16 07 2019).¹⁵⁸ Titushki not only dispersed protestors but also damaged their equipment and vehicles.¹⁵⁹

Reports claimed that titushki were being paid for attacking Euromaidan protestors because many of them were unemployed. According to these reports, some were paid 100 dollars per day, with an additional fare

¹⁵⁶ Neutral and pro-elite Internet sources were largely silent about the Euromaidan in Kharkiv.

¹⁵⁷ “Avakov soobshchil, kto rukovodil “tutishkami”, *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 3 April 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Olena Goncharova, “Titushki”, Yanukovych supporters take over Kyiv’s Mariinskiy Park”, *Kyiv Post*, 14 February 2014.

¹⁵⁹ “Tspoved’ “titushki””, *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 26 February 2014.

for beatings.¹⁶⁰ There were, however, others, who held strong Anti-Maidan convictions and considered Euromaidan protestors to be “traitors and hooligans”.¹⁶¹ One of my interviewees, who participated in the Anti-Maidan and pro-federal protests in early spring of 2014, argued that titushki “rose up for a cause, not for money”; “they were angry at the Euromaidan” (Interview participant 23 08 2018). Titushki were often members of local boxing and fight clubs, and it was reported that coaches and entire clubs participated in the attacks on the Euromaidan, especially in Kyiv. There was some evidence that the members of the fight club Oplot, based in Kharkiv, were bussed in to Kyiv as titushki in late February 2014, when violence took an upturn there.¹⁶² Oplot fighters and their leader Yevhen Zhilin were later included in the self-defence organisation “Ukrainian Front” established by the city mayor Hennadiy Kernes and the governor Mykhailo Dobkin. Again, it is difficult to find conclusive evidence about Oplot fighters’ motivation to attack Euromaidan protestors. According to one of my interviewees, Zhilin presented a committed and formidable Anti-Maidan force and was not concerned with monetary rewards (Interview participant 23 08 2018).

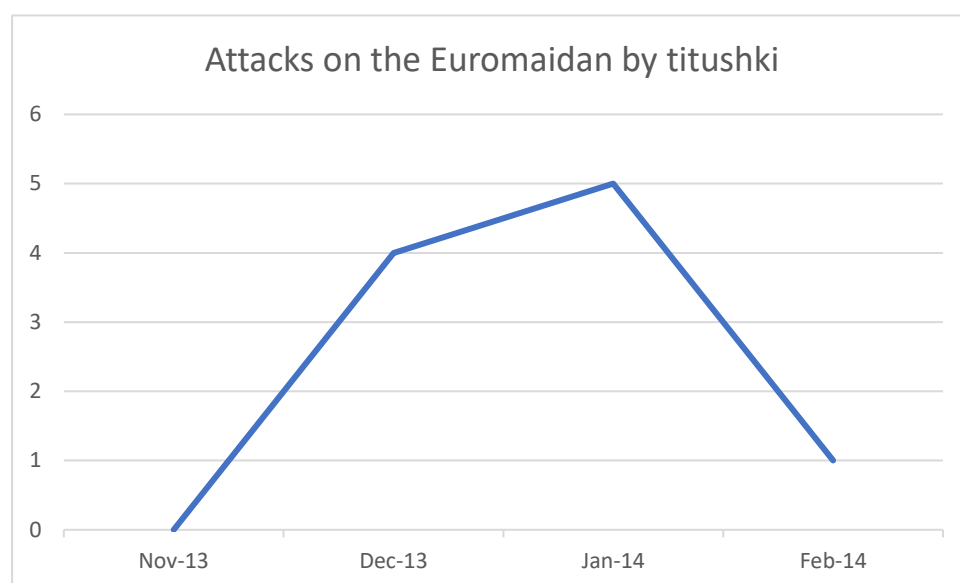
Regardless of the personal convictions of the attackers, Anti-Maidan violence in Kharkiv was greater and more systematic than in Donetsk. The protest cataloguing indicates that 12 out of 24 Euromaidan rallies were attacked by people who were overwhelmingly described as “titushki” in the press. These included physical attacks on the former Minister of the Interior Yuriy Lutsenko and a Batkivchshina deputy Ivan Varchenko, who came to speak at some of the Euromaidan rallies. Attacks increased over time and reached their peak in late January 2014. By contrast, no attacks were levelled on Anti-Maidan rallies.

¹⁶⁰ “Moi milyi “titushka””, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 13 December 2013.

¹⁶¹ “Ispoved’ “titushki””, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 26 February 2014.

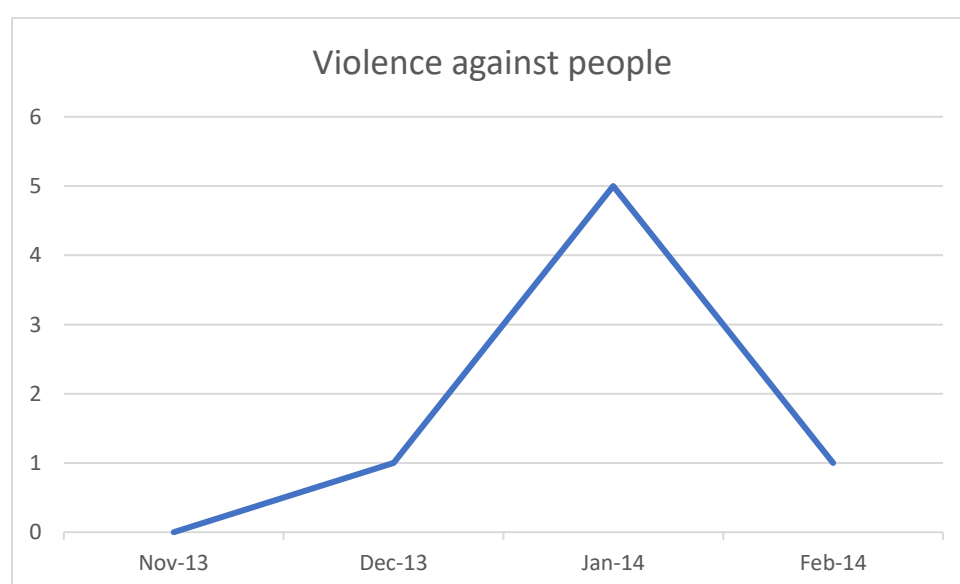
¹⁶² “Na stolichnykh pozniakakh zamecheny kharkovskie “titushki” Kernesha vmeste s militsiei – “patruliruiut””, *Censor.net*, 19 February 2014.

Table 11. Number of attacks by titushki on the Euromaidan protestors, November – February 2014



The qualitative process tracing indicates that the attacks perpetrated by titushki were consistent and followed a deadly trajectory: first, titushki attacked property of the Euromaidan protestors, then the groups of “unknowns” – a label which often described titushki – attacked individual organisers such as Dmytro Pylypets, and then they began attacking entire groups of protestors using more sophisticated equipment.

Table 12. Patterns of titushki’s violence against people



Violence against people reached its peak in late January 2014.

As the Euromaidan protest was underway, at first, protestors reported their equipment and cars damaged or stolen, presumably by titushki. On 18 December, activists claimed that groups of titushki stole their equipment and vandalised their office.¹⁶³ By early January, five cars owned or hired by Euromaidan protestors were damaged or burnt.¹⁶⁴

From late December, titushki began attacking individual Euromaidan protestors, and two activists were reported taken hostage. On 25 December, one of the Euromaidan organisers Dmytro Pylypets was severely attacked, with knife wounds inflicted on him.¹⁶⁵ On 25 January, the Bat'kivshchina deputy Ivan Varchenko claimed that two Euromaidan activists, Oleksandr Kutianin and Oleksiy Riapolov, were taken hostage.¹⁶⁶

From mid-January, titushki began attacking entire groups of protestors systematically, using more sophisticated equipment. If during their early attacks on people, titushki used only basic equipment, such as cuts of ice, over time they acquired more sophisticated equipment, such as Molotov cocktails, clubs and detonators. As can be seen on the videos, they might have been trained by someone to use this equipment, especially Molotov cocktails.¹⁶⁷ On 11 January, when masked people stormed a church where the Euromaidan forum was held,¹⁶⁸ an injured activist Oleh Kolotiy stated that the attackers “were clearly well-prepared and acted professionally”.¹⁶⁹ By 27 January, titushki were being bussed in to attack the Euromaidan protestors. For example, it was reported that on 25 January they came on 5 buses.¹⁷⁰ Dmytro Pylypets claimed that “these hired thugs were driven to the square on the local transport.”¹⁷¹ On 19

¹⁶³ “Opposition activist admitted to hospital with stab wounds in east Ukraine”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics* 25 December 2013

¹⁶⁴ “Neizvestnye v ocherednoi raz sozhgli avtomobil organizatorov khar'kovskogo Evromaidana”, *057*, 24 December 2013.

¹⁶⁵ “Ocherednoe napadenie na khar'kovskii “evromaidan”: Dmitrii Pilipets s nozhevymi raneniiami popal v “neotlozhu” (video)”, *057*, 25 December 2013.

¹⁶⁶ “Ivan Varchenko: “V Khar'kove vziaty v zalozhniki dvoe aktivistov Evromaidana”, *057*, 26 January 2014.

¹⁶⁷ “Marsh evromaidanovtsev, vzryvy petard, izbitye zhurnalisty i tolpa “titushek” s bitami na ploshchadi: kak Kharkov perezhil Den' studenta (foto)”, *057*, 26 January 2014.

¹⁶⁸ “Masked people reportedly storming pro-EU forum in Ukraine's Kharkiv”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile* 11 January 2014.

¹⁶⁹ “Injured activist describes attack on pro-EU forum in Ukraine's Kharkiv”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 12 January 2014

¹⁷⁰ “Kharkovskie ultras prishli pod okna obladministratsii. Miting edva ne zakonchilsia massovym poboishchem s “titushkami””, *057*, 25 January 2014.

¹⁷¹ “Tolpy titushek v maskakh i s bitami atakovali khar'kovskikh evromaidanovtsev. Napadavshikh privezli na gorodskikh marshrutkakh”, *057*, 27 January 2014.

February, as the Euromaidan activists were blocking the entrance to the Academy of the Interior to prevent the troops from leaving Kharkiv for Kyiv to disperse the Euromaidan, they were attacked by a group of titushki under the cover of the Berkut police. The result was a standoff between titushki, policemen, and activists. The violence was described as very vicious: “Everyone was beaten. They beat us with equipment and burnt detonators. They injured a few journalists”.¹⁷²

The attacks by titushki on the Euromaidan protestors predisposed the city to further violence. They also created a pool of potential fighters for the pro-Russian conflict mobilisation (Interview with Activist in Kharkiv, 16 07 2019), which, however, did not take place in Kharkiv. The systematic protest and violence during the Russian Spring in Kharkiv also created conditions for mobilisation, which I demonstrate below.

4. Russian Spring protest wave in Kharkiv

During the Russian Spring phase of political protest, the general political protest potential of the city remained high. According to my interview with the Activist in Kharkiv, the pro-federal protestors were “very aggressive” (16 07 2019). The aggregate pattern of protest demonstrates, however, that the radical protest was nearly absent and completely disappeared after 16 March. There were 17 protests on broad Euromaidan and anti-war themes, which I have catalogued as “Euromaidan”, “anti-Putin,” and “anti-war” respectively. The number of attendees at these protests fluctuated between 50 and 15000 people. The protestors sometimes marched through the central Kharkiv, from Taras Shevchenko monument to the Constitution Square.

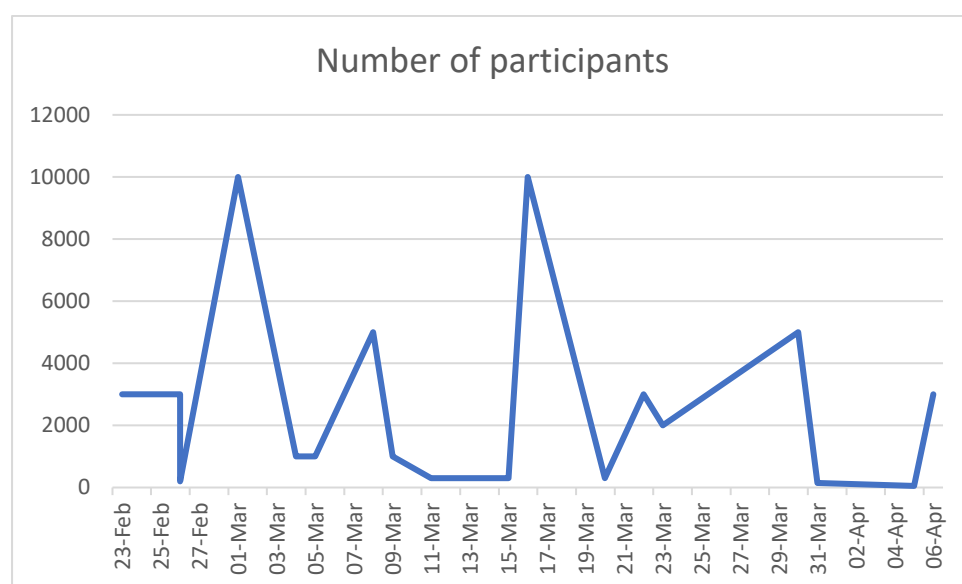
Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protests were more numerous. There were 25 protests on broad Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation themes. All the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protests from 23 February to 16 March included an appeal to Russia for help. As Yuriy Apukhtin revealed in an interview, in this period, the rallying cry “Russia” was “shaking the windows of the nearby buildings,” creating a pervasive Anti-Maidan emotional climate in the city.¹⁷³ Russian flags and St George ribbons were

¹⁷² “Vozle Akademii vnutrennikh voisk “titushki” ustroili krovavuiu boiniu. Zhestoko izbity neskol’ko zhurnalistov”, 057, 19 February 2014.

¹⁷³ “Politzaklyuchennyi Yuriy Apukhtin (Khar’kov). O sobytiakh vesny 2014 v Khar’kove”, *YouTube*, 29 March 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVKE57sLp0>

displayed at all protests. After 16 March, no direct appeals to Russia were reported, and the protestors focused on demanding the federalisation referendum and freedom for the detained Anti-Maidan activists such as Ihnat Kramskoi (nickname “Topaz”). The number of protestors at the pro-federalisation meetings fluctuated, with the mean of slightly over 3400 protestors (affected by the outlier of 20,000 people on 1 March), the median of 2000 and mode of 3000. Compared to similar statistics in Donetsk, this highlights that the protests were better attended in Kharkiv.

Table 13. Number of participants in the Russian Spring protests in Kharkiv, 23 February – 6 April 2014



As can be seen from the two tables below, the pro-federalisation protest was at its most intense in the period between 1 and 6 March. A similar intensity of the pro-Russian protest in the same period can be observed in Donetsk (below). As in Donetsk, the pro-federalisation protest in Kharkiv did “smoulder away” after 28 March (Wilson, 2016, 633).

Table 14. Mean number of protestors during the Russian Spring protests in Kharkiv, 23 February – 6 April 2014

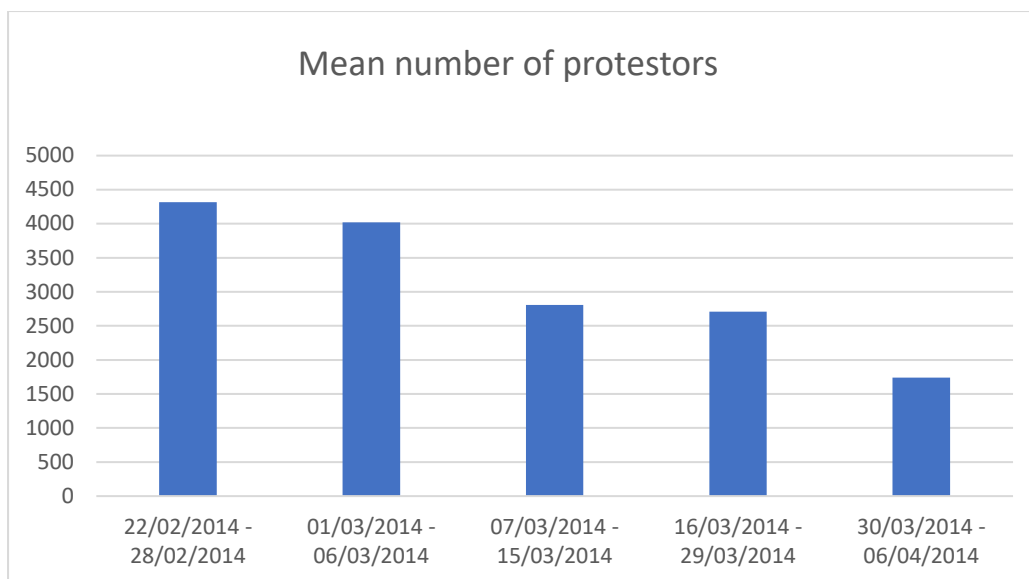
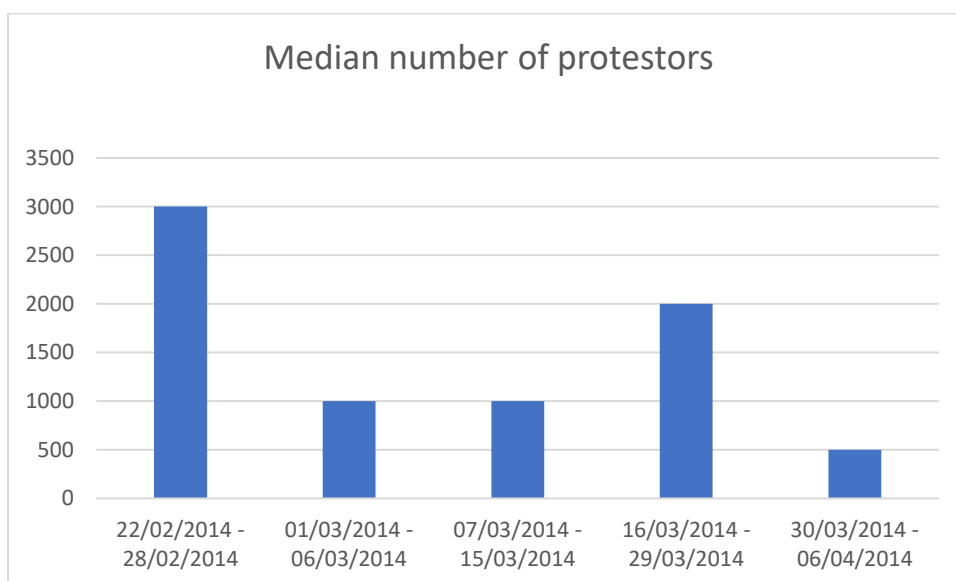


Table 15. Median number of protestors during the Russian Spring protests in Kharkiv, 23 February – 6 April 2014



The protest catalogue demonstrates that, compared to the Euromaidan protestors, who were largely confined to the Taras Shevchenko monument Square, Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protestors could protest on a larger scale and damage property. According to the protest catalogue, out of 25 Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protests, 7 involved marching through the centre and blocking transport; 4 involved picketing administrative buildings, such as the Kharkiv Regional Administration (HOGA) and

the headquarters of the regional SBU; 2 involved attacks on buildings such as the HOGA and Prosvita building on the Rymarska street. The start and end locations also varied a great deal, as illustrated by the table below:

Table 16. The end and start locations of the Russian Spring protests in Kharkiv, 23 February – 6 April 2014

Date	Claim or demands	Street action	Protest start location	Protest end location
04-Mar	Help from Russia; referendum; anti-Baluta	marching through the centre	HOGA	General Consulate of Russia
05-Mar	Help from Russia; referendum; anti-Baluta; anti-Kernes	marching through the centre	Freedom Square	Freedom Square
08-Mar	referendum; help from Russia; Customs Union, anti-NATO	marching through the centre	HOGA	city council
15-Mar	referendum	marching through the centre	City council	HOGA
16-Mar	referendum	marching through the centre; picketing	Freedom Square	HOGA
23-Mar	Yanukovych; referendum	blocked Sumska street; MVD, SBU, Rymarska	Lenin monument	SBU
30-Mar	Free Topaz; referendum	marching through the centre	Lenin monument	Polish consulate

During 11 March meetings, the central streets of Sumska, Trinkler, Ivanov and Sovnarkom, that is the whole of central Kharkiv, were blocked for transport. On 15 of March and 16 March, pro-federalisation activists blocked the entire Sumska street and moved from the Freedom Square, where they usually gathered for their rallies, to the Constitution Square. Pro-federalisation activists first picketed the Russian consulate, then marched towards the Polish consulate, picketed it, and then nearly set fire onto the Prosvita office. On 16 March, the protestors carried a large 100-metre Russian flag and hanged it out from the window of the Prosvita office. They also smashed the windows of the building, burnt books, and wrote “Kharkiv – Russia” on the building.¹⁷⁴ On 23 March, the Sumska was blocked for transport again; the protestors picketed the buildings of the Ministry of the Interior and the SBU, then moved towards the city council building.¹⁷⁵

Prior to the events of 13 March in Donetsk, protest violence in Kharkiv was more systematic than in Donetsk and caused significant damage. It was reported that 138 people were injured during the Anti-

¹⁷⁴ “Tolpa prorossiiskikh aktivistov razgromila ofis khar’kovskoi “Prosvity” i razbila avtomobil”, 057, 16 March 2014.

¹⁷⁵ “Na vykhidnikh u Kharkovi proishli prorosiis’ki mityngy”, *Slobids’kyy Kraii*, 24 March 2014.

Maidan rally on 1 March.¹⁷⁶ Out of 43 protest events during the entire period between 22 February and 6 April, 33 were not followed by an attack; 5 were followed by attacks involving serious violence against people; 3 protest events were followed by an attack on property such as administration buildings.

Violence was often perpetrated by groups of unaffiliated young people.¹⁷⁷ On the night of 14 March, violence reached its peak, when 2 Anti-Maidan activists were killed in a shootout between the Right Sector and the Anti-Maidan on Rymarska Street.

Protest violence seems to have been reciprocal.¹⁷⁸ Following the storming and occupation of the HOGA building by the Euromaidan activists on 23 February, the city mayor Kernes decided to organise an Anti-Maidan meeting on 1 March. Despite his invectives not to storm the HOGA,¹⁷⁹ half way through the meeting, the Anti-Maidan crowds became incensed and decided to attack the building to evict the Euromaidan activists.¹⁸⁰ As can be seen from the videos, the violence was largely reciprocal: the Euromaidan activists attacked the Anti-Maidan activists first, throwing bottles and sticks out of the building and spraying water. Kernes in a later interview stated that someone threw a smoke bomb and sticks out of the building to provoke the people.¹⁸¹ Vasil Homa also stated that violence was largely provoked by the Euromaidan activists barricaded in the building. According to another report, both sides threw sticks at each other and sprayed water, while the Anti-Maidan forces used incendiary devices filled with shrapnel.¹⁸² Gunshots were heard.¹⁸³ Stones and stun grenades were thrown.¹⁸⁴ The videos show that

¹⁷⁶ "Shturm – fakty", *Mediaport*, 02 March 2014; "Chto proizoshlo v Khar'kove", *BBC Russian*, 16 March 2014.

¹⁷⁷ "Khar'kov, "vynosy" i "zamesy", 15 April 2014 <http://liva.com.ua/kharkiv-fight.html>; <http://archive.is/Yuy4f>.

¹⁷⁸ Such as the one on 1 March 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlprTU5s_Mg ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGmXZ-c6dBI>.

¹⁷⁹ "Rossiia – SOS" ili vsego dva ukrainskikh flaga na mnogotysiachnuu tolpu: chto proishodit na ploshchadi Svobody" 057, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸⁰ "Kharkovchane vyshli na Svobodu zashchishchat' rodnoi gorod. Zdanie HOGA osvobodili ot evromaidanovtsev. Est' postradavshie", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 1 March 2014 ; "Kharkivsku obradu shturmovali ta zvil'nyly", *Slobids'kij Kraii*, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸¹ "Gennadii Kernes: Vlasti neobhodimo sdelat' vse vozmozhnoe chtoby uspokoit' khar'kovchan", *Khar'kov. Novostnoe Agenstvo*, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸² "V Khar'kove aktivisty s georgievskimi lentami shturmovali zdanie oblgosadministratsii", *Khar'kov. Novostnoe Agenstvo*, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸³ "Pro-Russian activists storm regional admin HQ in Kharkiv", *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 1 March 2014

¹⁸⁴ "Dozens hurt at pro-Russia protest in Ukraine's Kharkiv: AFP", *Agence France Presse*, 1 March 2014

the police were letting the stormers in without resistance.¹⁸⁵ The Anti-Maidan forces violently dragged out the Euromaidan activists from the building and beat them.¹⁸⁶ As Protest Organiser 2 told me, “we then began taking out the captives and trying to make sure that the crowd didn’t tear them apart because the women were mad [at them]” (28 09 2018). As a result, around 138 people were injured, according to the reports.

This trend of reciprocal violence continued throughout this period. In somewhat typical episodes of violence on 8 and 9 March, the pro-federalisation activists were attacked by “unknown armed people”; Serhiy Yudaev, one of the most radical Anti-Maidan activists, later claimed these were Right Sector activists (Yudaev, 2015, 24). The attackers arrived on a mini-bus and opened fire first and then attacked the pro-federalisation activists with sticks. Three people were injured as a result. Eye-witnesses were convinced that the attackers were Right Sector activists from Dnipropetrovsk.¹⁸⁷ Some pro-federalisation activists perpetrated violence against people unprovoked, such as on 23 March, when a car with the Ukrainian flag appeared at the pro-federalisation meeting. Both the car and the woman driving it were attacked.¹⁸⁸ The attacks on the Euromaidan activists also continued throughout the period: on 1 April, a car with national flags was shot at by pro-federalisation activists. The Euromaidan activists stated that attacks on their property also continued.¹⁸⁹

A significant episode of violence occurred on the night of 14 March on the Rymarska Street, when two Anti-Maidan activists were shot. Different interpretations exist of this episode. According to a blog, the Right Sector or “Patriots of Ukraine” activists barricaded themselves, with a stock of weapons,¹⁹⁰ in the Prosvita building on the Rymarska street a week prior to 14 March. On that day, they arrived to the Freedom Square on a mini-bus and attacked the Anti-Maidan activists, including Oplot fighters, encamped next to the Lenin monument. The regional governor Ihor Baluta claimed in a later interview

¹⁸⁵ “Mitinguiushchie vytashchili evromaidanovtsev na stsenu i postavili ikh na koleni”, 057, 1 March 2014. The flag on the building was put by a citizen of Moscow. See “Prorossiiskie nastroyeniia i provokatsii v gorodakh-“separatistakh” realizuiut zhiteli Rossii”, *Censor.net*, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸⁶ “Mitinguiushchie vytashchili evromaidanovtsev na stsenu i postavili ikh na koleni”, 057, 1 March 2014.

¹⁸⁷ “V Khar’kove napali na prorossiiskikh aktivistov”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 9 March 2014.

¹⁸⁸ “Na vykhidnykh u Khar’kovi proishly prorossiiskii mityngy”, *Slobids’kii Krai*, 24 March 2014.

¹⁸⁹ “V tsentre Khar’kova neizvestnye obstreliali mashinu evromaidanovtsev. Militsiia uvidela v sluchivshemsia “khuliganstvo”, 057, 1 April 2014.

¹⁹⁰ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/03/14/>; <http://archive.is/s2tsI>.

that this was a very well-planned provocation by Russian chauvinists.¹⁹¹ The Oplot activists followed the mini-bus to the Prosvita building. The Right Sector activists opened fire on their antagonists and threw Molotov cocktails from the building. They also took several people hostage, including a police officer. According to all accounts, it was the Right Sector who opened fire on the Anti-Maidan activists first.¹⁹² Yudaev, the regional governor Baluta and Kernes confirmed that the shootings were from the Prosvita building where the Right Sector activists were barricaded (Yudaev, 2015, 28 - 30). An international report stated that the building's security guard said the Right Sector shot out of the window at the Anti-Maidan activists gathered outside, an account matching that of three Anti-Maidan leaders.¹⁹³ The Oplot activists attempted to storm the building.¹⁹⁴ As a result, two were killed and five, including a senior lieutenant, severely injured.¹⁹⁵

During the night, Kernes, the head of the Ministry of the Interior in Kharkiv Anatoly Dmitriev, and the governor Baluta, came to the building to conduct negotiations with the activists and make them release the hostages.¹⁹⁶ According to the international reports, Kernes spoke to Andriy Beletskiy, the leader of the Right Sector in Kharkiv, asking him to release the hostages.¹⁹⁷ In his chronicle, Serhiy Yudaev claimed that Kernes was instructed to be lenient with the Right Sector activists on the punishment by death: “Avakov and Makhnitskiy (the general prosecutor) called Baluta, Kernes and Dmitriev ... and told Kernes that if Beletskiy and his friend are put in prison, Kernes will join them. If they are killed, Kernes will be killed too. As a result, Beletskiy was dressed into the police uniform and led out. But there is a video on which Kernes is shaking Beletskiy’s hand...” (Yudaev, 2015, 35). The Right Sector activists were put into custody but later released.

¹⁹¹ “Baluta: sobytiia na Rymarskoi – khorosho splanirovannaia provokatsiia prorossiiskikh shovinistov”, 057, 15 March 2014.

¹⁹² “Ukraine's Kharkiv mayor says numerous arms seized from suspects in clashes”, 15 March 2014, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*; “Kernes rasskazal, chto dumaet o situatsii v Khar'kove”, 057, 15 March 2014; <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/03/14/>; <http://archive.is/s2tsI>.

¹⁹³ “Violence erupts in Kharkiv as political turmoil grips city”, *Deutsche Welle*, 22 March 2014,

¹⁹⁴ “Trup, strel'ba i gotoviiashchisia shturm: chto proishodit na Rymarskoi (video)”, 057, 14 March 2014.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.; “Aktivist “pravogo sektora”: U “oplotovtsev” avtomaty i militseiskie shchity”, 057, 14 March 2014; “Violence erupts in Kharkiv as political turmoil grips city”, 22 March 2014, *Deutsche Welle*

¹⁹⁶ “Ukraine's Kharkiv mayor says numerous arms seized from suspects in clashes”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 15 March 2014.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/03/14/>; <http://archive.is/s2tsI>.

The Rymarska murders were comparable to the violent clashes taking place in Donetsk at the time. Yet, they did not radicalise or intensify the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protest in Kharkiv. The demand to investigate the murders was added to the set of demands made by the pro-federalisation activists, who continued to protest on a regular basis. The murders, therefore, did not lead to the radicalisation of the demands. In fact, following the murders, the local elites did everything to dampen the pro-federalisation protest.

I have demonstrated here that Kharkiv was engulfed in a systematic and often violent protest in late 2013 – early 2014, on a scale comparable to that in Donetsk, with greater violence during the Euromaidan phase of political protest. As in Donetsk, attendance at pro-federalisation protests began to slacken after 28 March, while the strong appeal to Russia was largely absent from the set of demands after 16 March. We can therefore discount the link between protest activity and conflict, at least in the case of Kharkiv.

5. Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan protest wave in Donetsk

The Euromaidan protest in Donetsk region was much smaller than its counterpart in Kharkiv city. Euromaidan protestors rarely gathered more than 300 people compared to the protestors in Kharkiv, where 3000 people were often attending the Euromaidan meetings. This was one of the reasons why Anti-Maidan violence was much less systematic and more contained in Donetsk region. The Euromaidan in Donetsk city and the region began on the night of 21 November 2013. On 22 November, there were as few as 4 people next to Shevchenko monument in Donetsk.¹⁹⁸ User frankenstein, a much-quoted pro-Ukrainian blogger, attested to the small number of people participating in the Euromaidan in Donetsk region.¹⁹⁹ Across the region, the Euromaidan was even less popular than in Donetsk: in Horlivka it gathered for the first time as late as 18 January.²⁰⁰ This was at the time when the whole of Western Ukraine was entering the “hot phase” of the Euromaidan. Similarly, the Avto-Maidan – the first Euromaidan meeting in Sloviansk on 18 December 2013 - gathered only a few people. The meeting consisted of a heated discussion between the local residents and the town mayor Nelia Shtepa, which

¹⁹⁸ “Donchane vyshli na spontanni Evromaidan noch’yu – foto i video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 November 2013.

¹⁹⁹ <https://frankenstein.livejournal.com/2013/12/22/>; <http://archive.is/nmb4a>.

²⁰⁰ “Gorlovskii Evromaidan: “titushki” s “pionerskimi galstukami” na litsakh i sozdanie oppositsionnoi mezhpartiinoi grupy v gorsovete”, *Gorlovka.ua*, 18 January 2014.

lasted for only 10 minutes, after which the protestors went home.²⁰¹ Slov”ians’k had frequent Anti-Maidan meetings; the ratio of Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan meetings was decidedly in favour of the Anti-Maidan in Slov”ians’k.

As in Kharkiv, there were fewer Anti-Maidan than Euromaidan protests. I have catalogued 29 Anti-Maidan against 36 Euromaidan protests. Elite Member 1 in his brief email to me stated that the “Anti-Maidan in Donetsk gathered 200 people at most... The Party of Regions, including myself, periodically organised some protests to guard law and order.” (Email exchange with Elite Member 1, 22 07 2019).

Table 17: The number of the Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan protest events in Donetsk region, November 2013 – February 2014, demonstrating the geographical diffusion of the protest in the region

Donets’k	44
Mariupol	11
Slov”ians’k	4
Horlivka	2
Other	3

Overall, the greatest number of protest events took place in Donetsk and Mariupol. There were far fewer in Slov”ians’k and Horlivka.

The demands of the Euromaidan protestors in Donetsk region were congruent with the demands in Kyiv and Kharkiv.²⁰² For example, after the violent dispersal of the Maidan protestors by the police on 30 November in Kyiv, the Euromaidan protestors in Donetsk demanded the resignation of the Azarov government, the punishment of the perpetrators of the violence against the Euromaidan

²⁰¹ “Avtoprobeh v podderzhku Evromaidana Slaviansk vstretil bez osobogo entuziazma”, *Slavgorod.com.ua*, 18 December 2013.

²⁰² “About 300 people at popular assembly in Donetsk demand Yanukovich, Azarov resignation, riot police disbandment” *Interfax: Ukrainian General NewsWire*, 1 December 2013; “Donetskii Evromaidan: kto prishel i pochemu”, *Ostrov*, 28 November 2013.

protestors, early elections, amnesty, and the disbandment of the riot police. They later demanded Yanukovych's resignation. As in Kharkiv, Euromaidan protestors gathered every day in Donetsk,²⁰³ and much less frequently in the region overall, only to stop on 24 January, after violent provocations by the Anti-Maidan organisations and titushki.²⁰⁴

The number of the Anti-Maidan protests led by organisations points to the organisation-led rather than elite-led nature of the Anti-Maidan in Donetsk. The Anti-Maidan and pro-Russian organisations were competing with the Party of Regions for protest attendees. As Elite Member 1 told me in his brief email, the Party of Regions organised a few Anti-Maidan protests to enforce law and order (email exchange 22 07 2019). Prior to 5 February, when the Party of Regions' activists began gathering daily next to Taras Shevchenko monument in Donetsk, 6 protests were held by organisations other than the Party of Regions, such as the Russian Bloc, Communist Party, Cossacks, Progressive Socialists and Donetsk Republic. Overall, where the organisations were clearly identified in the reports, 10 protests were held by organisations other than the Party of Regions against 8 of those held by the Party of Regions.

Table 18: Euromaidan in Donetsk region: Repertoire of contention or street action

march through the centre	3
picketing police headquarters	1
picketing Donetsk regional administration	1
picketing town council	1

As one can see, the Euromaidan protestors were allowed to block the central streets of Donetsk and picket important administrative buildings in Donetsk and the region at least twice. In Kharkiv this did not happen. On 21 December 2013 they conducted an "enlightenment march" through the centre, from

²⁰³ "Donchane, podderzhivaia evrointegratsiyu, reshili organizovat' kruglosutochnuiu aktsiiu pod pamiatnikom Shevchenko", *62.ua*, 25 November 2013.

²⁰⁴ "Na Donetsk'kom Evromaidane v blizhaishie dva dnia ne budet mitingov", *062.ua*, 24 January 2014; "Uchastnikov Donetsk'kogo Evromaidana prizyvaiut ne vykhodit na miting v voskresen'e", *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 January 2014.

“Zolotoe Koltso” to the Shevchenko monument Square.²⁰⁵ The march was repeated three times, and one can see on the video that the protestors even managed to block some transport.²⁰⁶

Large scale or systematic Anti-Maidan violence was absent in the Donets’k region, although there were plenty of calls for such violence. I have documented such calls for violence emanating from the key pro-Russian groups in Donets’k and juxtaposed them against the real picture of Anti-Maidan violence in the region. Perhaps the most well-recorded case of the open call for violence is the speech by Oleksandr Khriakov, the then head of a pro-Yanukovych movement “Komitet Izbiratelei Donbassa” and later one of the ministers in the nascent DNR, during the meeting on 8 February. Khriakov openly appealed to the Soviet army officers to come to the rescue of the Anti-Maidan forces in Ukraine and to demonstrate that “they have not forgotten the lot numbers on their guns”.²⁰⁷

The radical outlawed movement Donetsk Republic also appealed to violence against the Euromaidan protestors. It used its online platform on the Russian social media website Vkontakte not only to recruit people but also to issue or endorse a profusion of belligerent statements. On 7 February, the following message was posted on Donetsk Republic pages on Vkontakte: “Tomorrow the “Orange” Russophobe neo-banderites (or banderovtsy) will have a meeting next to the building of the Appeals Court... All those who want to come to beat them up, please write a message to me. We are going to be there at 11am. Let’s beat the fascists! Let’s clear the banderite scum from the Donbas!”²⁰⁸ Comments were made on the Euromaidan meeting on 26 January: “peaceful Russian people, including our activists, have beaten up the visiting “maidauns” in Donets’k on 26 January”.²⁰⁹ Donetsk Republic frequently endorsed the posts by one “Varyag Crew” who posted on 29 December: “Today we have thrown eggs at you, tomorrow we will treat you to bullets!”²¹⁰ and on 9 January “Today [we are coming out] with posters, but tomorrow [we will be] with guns!”.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ “V Donets’ke aktivisty Evromaidana provedut “prosvetitel’skii marsh”, *062.ua*, 21 December 2013.

²⁰⁶ “Treti Evromarsh v Donetske”, *YouTube*, 5 January 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y_0OIUUYJI

²⁰⁷ <https://frankensstein.livejournal.com/2014/02/08/>; <http://archive.is/Pdkix>; “Donetsk: Oruzhie protiv Evromaidana”, *YouTube*, 8 February 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E4wccw42Zw>.

²⁰⁸ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=07022014&w=wall-3223620_24730%2Fall; <http://archive.is/kRbIk>

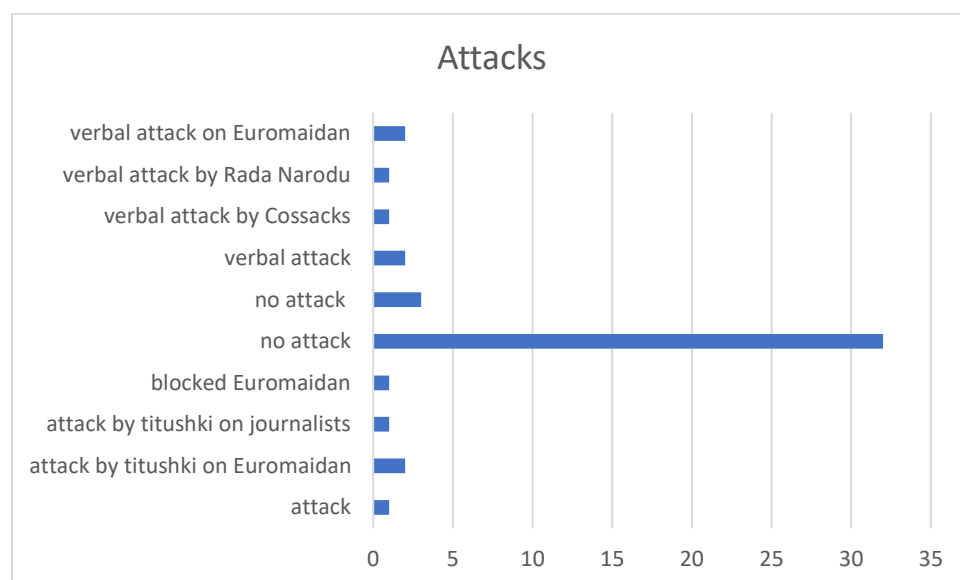
²⁰⁹ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=26012014&w=wall-3223620_24080%2Fall; <http://archive.is/qvHDM>

²¹⁰ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=29122013&w=wall-3223620_23480%2Fall; <http://archive.is/m4Zxl>

²¹¹ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=09012014&w=wall-3223620_23598%2Fall; <http://archive.is/JhBQg>

Despite these calls to violence, there was no systematic violence against people or their property in Donets'k region. The quantitative evidence demonstrates this pattern.

Table 19: Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan protests in Donets'k: Attacks on people (as reported)



As one can see, the vast majority of Euromaidan protests were not followed by an attack. Verbal attacks were common, compared to the systematic and numerous serious violence against people in Kharkiv. Verbal attacks were perpetrated by Anti-Maidan organisations, such as the spontaneously organised Rada Narodu, Cossacks and others. Many verbal attacks were recorded on videos.²¹² Sometimes disruptions were accompanied by purely symbolic actions such as tearing the Ukrainian flag apart or shouting slogans such as “Fashistam get” (Fascists out). Disruptions often included switching on loud music.²¹³ A rather typical incident along these lines was reported in Horlivka, during the very first Euromaidan meeting on 18 January. It was reported that along with the Euromaidan protesters, a group of men with red badges came to the meeting and engaged in verbal attacks on the “fascists”. They were driven out of the square by a deputy policeman.²¹⁴

²¹² <https://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/24771.html> ; <http://archive.is/Joy6m>;
<https://frankensstein.livejournal.com/2013/12/29/>; <http://archive.is/bQ9tr>.

²¹³ “Antimaidan v Donets'ke: trebovali CHP v strane i kidali prezervativy”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 20 January 2014.

²¹⁴ “Gorlovskii Evromaidan: “titushki” s “pionerskimi galstukami” na litsakh I sozdanie oppozitsionnoi mezhpartiinoi gruppy v gorsoвете”, *Gorlovka.ua*, 18 January 2014.

I did not find any evidence of the Euromaidan protesters attacking their Anti-Maidan counterparts across blog posts, newspapers or social media.

Table 20: Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan in Donetsk: type of attacks against people

Type of violence	
egg-throwing	1
egg and paint throwing	1
serious violence against people	3

A simple count of the kind of attacks reveals that serious violence was far and between and very unsystematic.

As I have already documented quantitatively, the majority of the attacks were verbal. For example, on 25 November, a group of Cossacks from the “International Union of Cossacks of Ukraine and Abroad” came to the Euromaidan meeting and verbally attacked the protesters. This can be seen on the video.²¹⁵ Verbal attacks were levelled by Rada Narodu and others. Whereas in Kharkiv by late January there was full-fledged serious violence against the Euromaidan activists, in Donetsk the activists of the Anti-Maidan would often be verbally aggressive but abstain from physical violence. For example, on 19 January, the activists of the Anti-Maidan were verbally aggressive but not violent towards Auto-Maidan activists.²¹⁶ This can be seen on the video.²¹⁷ Titushki, if they were present at all, were not as well equipped as their Kharkiv counterparts. For example, they would often throw eggs, paint and snowballs²¹⁸ at Euromaidan activists but never Molotov cocktails or detonators.

The only significant episode of violence, with four people injured, occurred on 26 January,²¹⁹ when a group of young people came to disrupt Euromaidan meeting, attacked journalists and seriously

²¹⁵ “Donetsk: provokator-regional protiv Evromaidana”, *YouTube*, 4 December 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYMU2KFxeiE>

²¹⁶ “Po itogam Evromaidana v Donetske postupilo 9 zaiavlenii v militsiiu”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 19 January 2014.

²¹⁷ “19 ianvaria 2014 goda: blokirovanie Avtomaidana v Donetske”, *YouTube*, 19 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nD45lj1saok>

²¹⁸ “Khronika 22 ianvaria v Donets’ke. “Titushki” napali na zhurnalistov i sozhgli flag”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 January 2014.

²¹⁹ “Stolknoenie v Donetske 25 ianvaria 2014”, *YouTube*, 26 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErAHSOqdTeY>

injured a journalist Serhiy Zhelnakov.²²⁰ Donetsk Republic activists rejoiced at this development. “The meeting next to Shevchenko monument was attended by around 300 to 400 people. These were Afghantsy, Cossacks and, of course, titushki. They were young lads with fire in their eyes and very aggressive. I think the grandfathers of these guys were driving the Germans in 1945 to Berlin. During one incident, we noticed a group of people with masks and sticks. They were quickly “beaten up”. It was done very quickly, with a speed of a lightening bolt.... I met one of my acquaintances who supports the Euromaidan. He tried to defend that group of people but was beaten up too. I did not defend him but I’d have dealt with him even better if given a chance”.²²¹

It is significant that despite the stereotype about the ineffective Donetsk police that developed during the Russian Spring phase, the police acted promptly and managed to restrain protesters on both sides. We often encounter such statements in the newspaper accounts of protests, as “interfered on time”²²² or “acted professionally to stop violence from escalating”.²²³ This can also be seen on the videos. On 26 January, the police can be seen in full gear trying to stop the violence.²²⁴ Judging from the evidence available, the police in Donetsk overall were much more proactive than their Kharkiv counterparts.

Table 21. Euromaidan and Anti-Maidan in Donetsk: Police response to protest violence

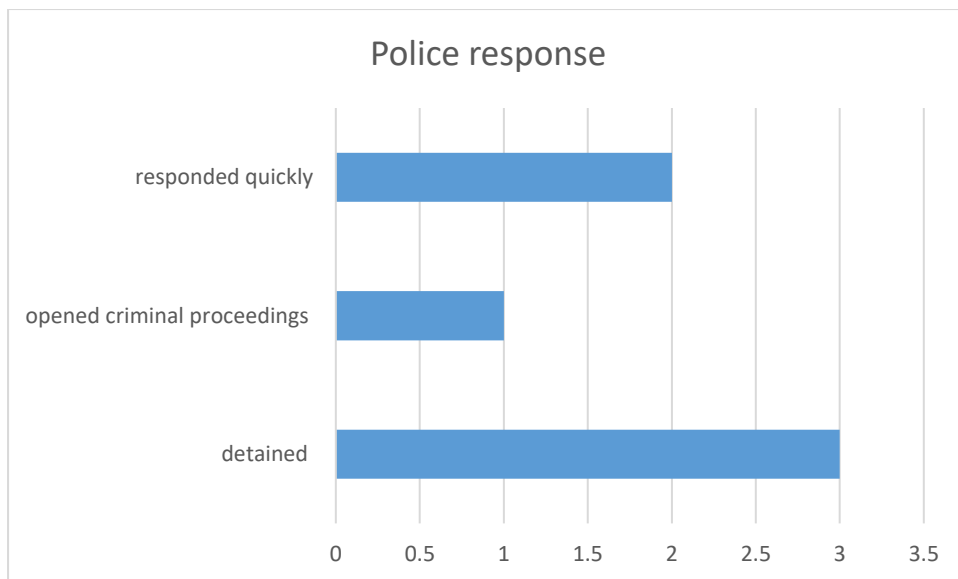
²²⁰ “25 Ianvaria v Donetske: protivostoianie”, *YouTube*, 25 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3QqUILDluo>

²²¹ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=26012014&q=%D0%91%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BD&w=wall-3223620_24080; <http://archive.is/zRTgV>

²²² “Kreshchenskii Evromaidan v Donets’ke – veche, draka, razorvannye flagi, razbityj megafon i postanovochnoe DTP”, *062.ua*, 19 January 2014.

²²³ “Donets’kaia militsia s trudom sderzhivaet izbienie 40 aktivistov “Batkivshchiny” 300 uchastnikami Antimaidana”, *Ostron*, 08 February 2014.

²²⁴ “Pervaia potasovka evromaidan Donetsk”, *YouTube*, 19 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqwirmz54Ws>



In contrast to their counterparts in Kharkiv city, local Anti-Maidan and pro-Russian activists in Donetsk region opted for a non-violent way of “resolving the “Euromaidan problem” in their region. They would often try to wrest the control of the streets away from their Euromaidan counterparts by filing requests to the city and towns administration to hold their meetings at the same time as the Euromaidan or by occupying the Shevchenko square themselves. In Slov”ians’k, for example, on 26 December, the town mayor Nelia Shtepa prohibited the Euromaidan because “another meeting”, that is the Anti-Maidan, was being held on the central square at the same time.²²⁵ The same pattern could be observed in Horlivka. There Anti-Maidan and Euromaidan organisations would often file their requests to hold their meeting at the same time.²²⁶ On 24 January, Anti-Maidan protestors forced Euromaidan protestors out of the Shevchenko monument square. On 25 January, “titushki” cleared the square of the Euromaidan protestors and the meeting of Afghan veterans began instead.²²⁷ By 31 January, when Euromaidan protests ceased due to fears of impending attacks, the Party of Regions’ activists decided to hold a meeting in support of Yanukovych on the Shevchenko Square every day, at the usual meeting place for Euromaidan activists.

²²⁵ “Ne vinovataia ia... Mer Slavianska ob’iasnila, pochemu uchastnikov avtoprobega ne pustili na tsentral’nuu ploshchad’ goroda”, *Slavgorod.com.ua*, 26 December 2013.

²²⁶ “Byvshuiu uchitel’nitsu, pytavshuisia rasskazat’ ob ideiakh Evromaidana, vytolkali s ploshchadi Shevchenko pod krika “ed” otsiuda, uezzhai iz Gorlovki”, *Gorlovka.ua*, 9 February 2014.

²²⁷ “Storonniki Yanukovicha izbili uchastnikov Evromaidana v Donetske”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 January 2014.

To summarise this section, Anti-Maidan protest violence during the Euromaidan phase of the political protest in the Donetsk region was very unsystematic and restricted to mostly verbal attacks on the Euromaidan activists. At the first glance, it seems to have failed to create a pool of unruly fighters that could be mobilised during the Russian Spring and beyond. Journalist 1 confirmed to me in an interview that the Anti-Maidan groups were sporadic. “There were small and infrequent clashes,” he said. He also stated that the Anti-Maidan was intimately connected to the criminal networks of Armen Sarkisyan from Horlivka, who did not know whom to support.

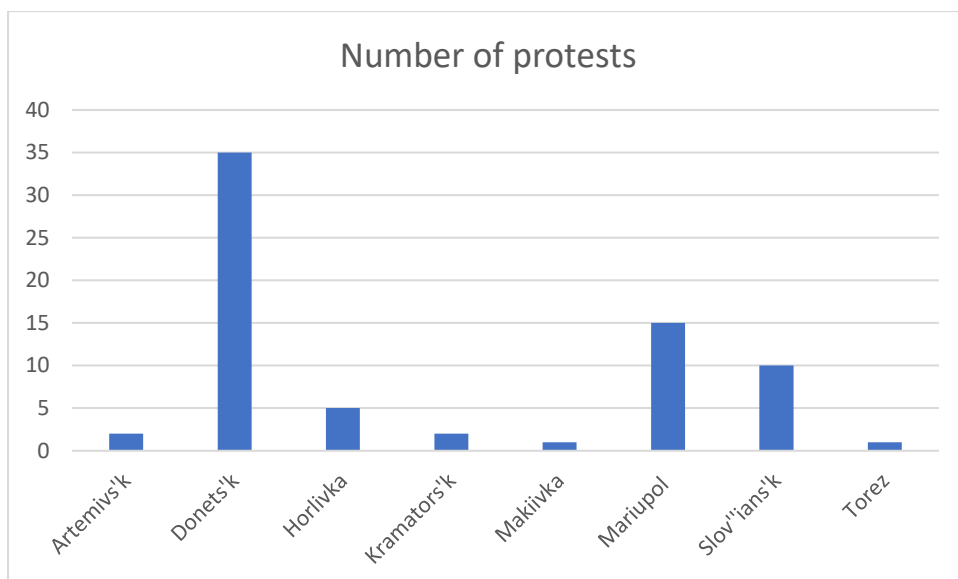
6. Russian Spring protest wave in Donetsk region

Following the flight of Yanukovich on the night of 21 February 2014, Donetsk region became engulfed in a protest of an extraordinary intensity, considering how weak the region’s protest potential had been historically. According to my interview with Journalist 1, “There was the regional council’s session behind closed doors during which the deputy chairman of the regional council Aleksandr Tret’yak presented his scenario of how things were going to develop from now on. For many, the scenario was too apocalyptic, so they refused to believe” (19 07 2019). Journalist 1 further elaborated and stated that Donetsk region was engulfed in a classic protest during the Russian Spring, “when people knew what they were against, but they did not know what they were for”. He further confirmed that Donetsk Republic, the radical movement, was present at all the protests “because it provided the most suitable ideology”. According to my brief exchange with Elite Member 1, after the flight of Yanukovich, “people began protesting en masse against the nationalists” (email exchange, 22 07 2019).

There were at least 80 meetings in total in the region during the period between 22 February and 6 April 2014. According to a report by the deputy head of Mariupol police Yuriy Horustovych, at least 30 meetings had been held in Mariupol alone by 21 March.²²⁸ Most of pro-Russian and pro-federalisation meetings took place in Donetsk and Mariupol, as the table below attests.

Table 22: Geographical diffusion of pro-Russian and pro-federalisation protest in Donetsk region, 22 February – 6 April

²²⁸ “V Mariupole militsia otкрыla 6 ugolovnykh proizvodstv na uchastnikov prorossiiskikh mitingov”, *0629.com.ua*, 21 March 2014.



Compared to Kharkiv, where Euromaidan protestors and those supporting Ukrainian unity could hold their meetings throughout the period almost unhindered, in Donetsk's region, these meetings were quickly sidelined. Out of 80 protests, I catalogued only 14 meetings on the Euromaidan and broad pro-Ukrainian themes, such as for the unity of Ukraine and against war. These pro-Ukrainian meetings gathered few people, with the greatest number of people (10,000) reported on 5 March. The number of attendees at other similar meetings fluctuated between 30 and 2000 participants. Often, these protestors were simply chased out of their gathering place by pro-Russian activists. On 2 March, for example, 50 people gathered next to Shevchenko monument to hold a pro-Ukrainian meeting and commemorate those perished during the Euromaidan, but pro-Russian activists quickly chased them away.²²⁹ This was confirmed in the account by a pro-Russian blogger.²³⁰ On 5 March, pro-Ukrainian protestors were forced to gather at night for the biggest pro-Ukrainian meeting in this period.²³¹ After 16 March, the regional authorities began encouraging pro-Ukrainian protestors to abstain from holding their meetings or to stay within designated zones during their meetings due to the threat of protest violence.²³²

²²⁹ "U zdaniia DONOGA 1500 chelovek mitinguiut za soiuз s RF, miting v Makeevke", *Novosti Donbassa*, 2 March 2014.

²³⁰ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/03/05/>; <http://archive.is/BLrt3>.

²³¹ <https://pauluskp.livejournal.com/2014/03/05/>; <http://archive.is/hMCZ9>.

²³² "Miting za edinuiu Ukrainu v Donetsk'e perenesli – video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 March 2014; "V tsentre Donetsk'a na svoi mitingi sobiraiutsia storonniki edinstva Ukrainy i prorossiiskie aktivisty", *Ostro.org*, 13 March 2014; "Chto dumaiut chleny PR o liudiakh, kotorye blokirovali DONOGA – video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 April 2014.

In contrast to Kharkiv, pro-federal and pro-Russian organisations wrested the initiative away from the Party of Regions during this period: all of the meetings I have catalogued were led by these organisations. As in Kharkiv, the systematic pro-Russian and pro-federalisation protest in Donetsk region was launched by the Communist Party as “Lenin monument defence” on 22 February. In Sloviansk, the Communist Party continued to be the main organiser of the pro-federal and pro-Russian meetings. However, in contrast to Kharkiv, where such developments were not systematically observed, groups of spontaneously mobilised armed people began gathering in parallel to the meetings organised by the institutionalised parties. In Donetsk, one such group of people called themselves “Vostochnyi Front” or “Eastern Front”.²³³ Pavel Gubarev’s Narodnoe Opolchenie Donbassa (Donbass People’s Militia/ Self-Defense) also unleashed spontaneous mobilisation of armed people.²³⁴ After 16 March, this parallel development became harder and harder to control; armed groups proliferated, while ordinary citizens began creating checkpoints and blocking military hardware that was being moved around the region. This phenomenon of spontaneous armed mobilisation, not immediately observed, became one of the key factors propelling the region towards conflict. In chapter 5, I detail how this development occurred as a result of the opening of political opportunities for radical activism by the local elites and the skilful use of these opportunities by the activists.

The demands of the pro-federal and pro-Russian protestors in the Donetsk region were similar to the demands of their counterparts in Kharkiv. After 1 March, the most frequent demands were to conduct a referendum on the federalisation of the Donetsk region, to ouster the “illegitimate” government in Kyiv and its “illegitimate” “henchman” governor Serhiy Taruta, and to seek protection by Russia. For example, on 5 March, the protestors in Sloviansk demanded from the city council a referendum on the status of the south-east, expression of no-confidence in the governor Taruta, rejection of the agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and the prohibition of shale gas extraction in Sloviansk. The demands also included the release of radical pro-Russian activists, such as Pavel Gubarev, after his detention by the SBU on 6 March 2014. These demands remained stable throughout the period.

²³³ “Uchastniki “Vostochnogo Fronta” v Donetske namereny sozdavat’ otriady samooborony dlia zashchity regiona ot “banderovtsev”, *Ostrov*, 22 February 2014.

²³⁴ ““Narodnyi gubernator” Donetska priznal, chto ego boitsy vooruzheny”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 March 2014; “Moia populiarnost’ – eto ikh glupost’”, *Lenta.ru*, 5 March 2014.

At the same time, in contrast with Kharkiv, the demand to unite with Russia or to conduct a referendum which included a question on unity with Russia was voiced from early on and systematically during the first phase of the protest, that is, between 2 February and 6 March. On 22 February, in Slov”ians’k, during the “meeting of the friendship of Slavic people”, led by the local branch of the Communist Party, the protestors read an appeal to Putin to protect the people against fascism. Apart from the demands for the referendum,²³⁵ it was reported in some newspapers that the protestors demanded outright unity with Russia.²³⁶ On 1 and 3 March, several reports stated that the protestors demanded the annexation of the Donets’k region by Russia.²³⁷ Gubarev’s Narodnoe Opolchenie demanded a referendum with a question on the unity of the region with Russia.²³⁸ On 1, 16 and 22 March, Donetsk Republic proposed a set of demands that included the “return of the Donbas to Russia”.²³⁹ After Gubarev’s arrest on 6 March, the demand for unity with Russia did not disappear but was voiced more sporadically, such as on 9 March.²⁴⁰ In the latter part of the protest, from 17 March till 5 April, the demand for a referendum was more frequent and the demand to join Russia somewhat subsided but was still present. The subsequent chapters detail how these radical demands could emerge in the region with the connivance of the local elites.

The number of pro-Russian and pro-federal protest participants was most consistently reported in Donets’k and underreported in the surrounding towns. The mean of the number of protest participants in Donets’k was slightly over 2000, the mode 2000 and the median 1000. This indicates that the protests were less well attended in Donets’k than in Kharkiv. My main sources for protest cataloguing, *Novosti Donbassa* and *Ostro.org*, known for their pro-Ukrainian position but also for their consistently high quality journalism, reported that the protests were attended by mostly low thousands, rarely reaching over 8

²³⁵ “V Slavianske proshel miting druzhby: liudi prosilis’ v Rossiui i plakali, provozhaia poezd Kislovodsk – Moskva”, *Slavgorod.com.ua*, 22 February 2014; “V Slavianske na mitinge komunistov trebovali referendum i obrashchalis’ k Putinu”, *Gorod Slaviansk*, 22 February 2014; “Ob’yavlenie. 22 fevralia obshchegorodskoi shod”, *Gorod Slaviansk*, 21 February 2014.

²³⁶ “V Slavianske proshel miting druzhby: liudi prosilis’ v Rossiui i plakali, provozhaia poezd Kislovodsk – Moskva”, *Slavgorod.com.ua*, 22 February 2014.

²³⁷ “Donets’k nakryla “Russkaia vesna”, *Novaia Gazeta*, 1 March 2014; ““Vostochnyi Front” v Donets’ke: Separatizm ne privedet k blagopoluchiiu”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 8 March 2014; “Pro-Russian rallies in southeast Ukraine call for secession”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 1 March 2014

²³⁸ <http://archive.is/Hychz>

²³⁹ <http://archive.is/Ox6h4>; <http://archive.is/MsMgG>

²⁴⁰ “Uchastniki prorossiiskogo mitinga dvinulis’ k Donets’koi oblastnoi gosudarstvennoi administratsii”, *Ostrov*, 9 March 2014; “In Ukraine, protests and hopes for diplomacy”, *International New York Times*, 10 March 2014,

thousand, except on 1 and 5 March. Foreign-language sources often relied on the figures reported in *Novosti Donbassa* or else reported the number of protestors as “several thousand”.²⁴¹ The radical pro-Russian groups systematically exaggerated the number of protest participants. For example, Gubarev’s Donbass People’s Militia reported over 50 thousand people attending 1 March meeting²⁴² and over 15 thousand people on 31 March in Donetsk.²⁴³ Similarly, Donetsk Republic reported over 15 thousand on 23 March.²⁴⁴ The two tables below attest to the fact that the pro-Russian and pro-federalisation protests did begin to “smoulder away” after 28 March.

Table 23: Russian Spring in Donetsk region: mean number of protestors



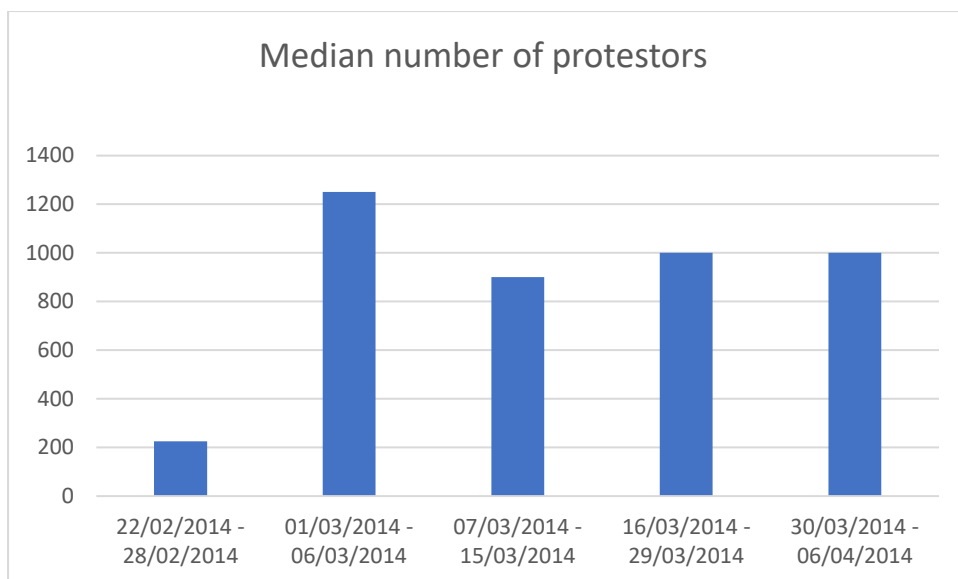
Table 24: Russian Spring in Donetsk region: median number of protestors

²⁴¹ “Thousands demand referendum on Donbas' status at pro-Russian rally”, *Interfax: Russia & CIS Military Newswire*, 31 March 2014; “Pro-Russian rally being held in Donetsk”, *Interfax: Russia & CIS Military Newswire*, 24 March 2014,

²⁴² https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=02032014&w=wall-67059574_3563%2Fall; <http://archive.is/2QDnq>

²⁴³ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=31032014&w=wall-67059574_193036%2Fall; <http://archive.is/99gsh>

²⁴⁴ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=23032014&w=wall-3223620_41849%2Fall; <http://archive.is/0sAhG>



As in Kharkiv, the majority of pro-federal and pro-Russian protests were not followed by attacks on people or property. At the same time, Donetsk region witnessed a higher number of attacks on and storming of government buildings, which indirectly testifies to the greater strength of the emotion of anger among the residents of Donetsk than among the residents of Kharkiv (Pearlman, 2013). In my interview with Journalist 1, he stated that the buildings were taken “too easily”. The SBU building was “taken by 40 people at most; nobody knew who opened the room with the weapons”. Process tracing in the subsequent chapters shows how this happened. There were at least 6 attacks on government buildings, such as the attack on the regional administration building (DONOGA) on 3 and 5 March, when the building was occupied by the protestors. There were attacks on the SBU building and the regional prosecutor building in Donetsk on 15 and 16 March, when the protestors managed to put the Russian and Donetsk Republic flags on the buildings.²⁴⁵ The governor Taruta’s ISD office was also attacked on 16 March.²⁴⁶ Overall, compared to Kharkiv, where no similar incidents occurred between 1 March and 6 April, in Donetsk region, the pro-Russian protestors often managed to mount the Russian and Donetsk Republic flags on the buildings of the regional administration and the city councils in

²⁴⁵ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/03/16/>; <http://archive.is/1FJuF>.

²⁴⁶ “V Donetsk’e prorossiiskie aktivisty osvobodzhaiut zdanie prokuratury”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 March 2014; <https://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/2014/03/17/>; <http://archive.is/YYXkz>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=16032014&w=wall-3223620_36895%2Fall; <http://archive.is/kzSzD>

Donets'k and Mariupol. As in Kharkiv, central streets and important government buildings were systematically blocked in Donets'k and the region. This occurred on 9 of March and 16 March, and during all pro-Russian meetings from 30 March²⁴⁷ to 6 April.

The proportion of reciprocal protest violence in Donets'k region was only slightly higher than in Kharkiv (12% against 11%). Out of 80 meetings, 10 were followed by attacks, including attacks on journalists and sporadic attacks on protestors. Two meetings, on 5 March and 13 March, were followed by attacks involving serious violence against people. According to the reports, on 5 March, 7 people were injured during the episode of reciprocal protest violence.²⁴⁸ On 13 March, 1 person was killed and at least 26 were injured.²⁴⁹ As in Kharkiv, pro-Russian protestors would often become incensed at the sight of a car with a Ukrainian flag.²⁵⁰

Judging by the extent of protest violence, the meeting on 13 of March was similar to the meeting in Kharkiv on 1 March. It was unclear as to who initiated the violence first. Some reports stated that “The pro-Russian activists initiated some acts of provocation by throwing eggs, fire crackers and smoke bombs [at their opponents]”.²⁵¹ These reports stated that the pro-Russian activists stormed the buses on which the Ukrainian protesters were trying to leave. Overall, the reports gave conflicting information as to who provoked the violence. Openly pro-Russian media sources such as Donetsk Republic's Vkontakte pages stated that it was the Ukrainians who provoked the violence. The participants discussed on the social media how it was provoked by the Euromaidan forces who came to Donets'k to incite provocations.²⁵² Many people were emotionally affected by the events at the meeting and therefore left many belligerent comments on the Donetsk Republic's Vkontakte pages.

²⁴⁷ “V Donetske separatist traditsionno perekryli dvizhenie po ulitse Artema”, *Ostrov*, 30 March 2014.

²⁴⁸ “Dozen injured as proRussians retake regional govt in east Ukraine”, 5 March 2014, *Platts Commodity News*; “7 chelovek postradali v khode stolknovenii v Donets'ke”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 March 2014; “Sem' chelovek postradali v rezul'tate stolknovenii v Donetske”, *Ostrov*, 5 March 2014.

²⁴⁹ “Prokuratura oblasti nachala rassledovanie deistvii rabotnikov militsii vo vremia massovykh besporiadkov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 14 March 2014; “Odin chelovek pogib pri stolknoveniiakh uchastnikov mitinga za edinuiu Ukrainu s prorossiiskimi aktivistami na ploshchadi Lenina v Donetske”, *Ostrov*, 13 March 2014.

²⁵⁰ “Videofakt. V Donetske prorossiiskie aktivisty napali na zhenshchinu s ukrainskim flagom”, *Ostrov*, 10 March 2014.

²⁵¹ “One killed, dozen injured as opponents clash in Ukraine's eastern city”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 13 March 2014

²⁵² <https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=16032014>; <http://archive.is/ICMvt>.

In summary, during the Russian Spring, the protest intensity and the incidence of protest violence were as high in Donetsk region as they were in Kharkiv. Simple statistical analysis of attendance at pro-Russian and pro-federal protests points that the protests were better attended in Kharkiv. In both regions, a pervasive anti-government emotional climate was created owing to the intensity of pro-federal and pro-Russian protest. At the same time, radical pro-Russian demands were voiced early on, while attacks on government buildings were more numerous in Donetsk region. Yet, in both regions the protests did “smoulder away” after 28 March, as the statistics shows.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the intensity of protest and protest violence should not be automatically linked to the incidence of internal war. I started with the discussion of the overall political protest potential in Kharkiv city and Donetsk region, in which I have demonstrated that Kharkiv city had greater overall political protest potential than the entire Donetsk region. This could have theoretically led to greater political destabilisation in Kharkiv. I then discussed the nature of the Euromaidan, Anti-Maidan, and the Russian Spring protest waves in both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region. I have shown that structurally similar regions can demonstrate similar propensity to protest and protest violence, with one region demonstrating even greater propensity to protest violence at certain points during the protest wave. This points to a theoretically important conclusion that people in structurally similar regions can be animated by similar emotions, as they are effectively immersed in similar “emotional climates” or display propensity to similar “emotional worldviews” (Bale et al., 2016; Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The protest potential of the regions can also be a poor guide for the decisions of foreign actors as to where to start the insurgency.

At the same time, there were some important variations in the Russian Spring protest waves in the regions. I have shown that the attacks on government buildings were more frequent and the appeals to Russia were voiced early on in Donetsk region. These simple observations, however, are not enough to lead one to conclude that Donetsk region was somewhat more predisposed to an armed conflict than the city of Kharkiv. In the subsequent two chapters, I detail how and why the political opportunities for

radical pro-Russian activism and foreign intervention were opened in both regions by the local elites and why they were subsequently closed in Kharkiv while remaining open in the Donetsk region.

Chapter 4: Elites and Regional Patronage

1. Introduction

In the theoretical introduction to the study, I have problematized the role of the local people and external ethnic patrons in causing the Donbas conflict. I argued that ascribing responsibility for the conflict to these actors becomes especially problematic if the conflict is examined comparatively. I have therefore considered Donetsk region in a comparative perspective with a structurally similar city of Kharkiv and built a theory of political opportunity opened by the local elites for specific types of protest. My main argument is that a clientelistic polity (Kitschelt, H., and Wilkinson, S. 2007, 19) would experience conflict if its elites function under the system of concentrated patronage. I define patronage in line with the definition provided by Henry Hale in *Patronal Politics*: “politics in societies where individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments through chains of actual acquaintance, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorizations like economic class that include many people one has not actually met in person” (Hale, 2015, 9- 10).

I argue that the local elites find themselves operating within a complex web of the specific regional patronage system. This system of regional patronage broadly describes the lines along which resources are delivered to the region and the “safeguards” that keep the elites in their seats and their assets protected. These lines (or personal networks) connecting the centre and the region are described by Easter as “a power resource [providing] an informal social structure by which information [is] exchanged, resources [are] obtained, and collaborative actions [are] planned” (Easter, 2000, 11). Holding constant other structural conditions, such as shared history and the presence of Russian speakers, as well as the aggregate pattern of the rising protest potential in both regions, we can argue that the main difference between the two regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv is the type of patronage that applies to their elites. I therefore develop the elements of the hypothesis 3 in this chapter: *H3: the local elites would encourage or discourage specific types of protest depending on the regional patronage system.*

We can distinguish between two types of patronage: diffused and concentrated. For one group of elites, their success in remaining in power and securing resources is premised upon their preferred network's continuing presence in the centre (Zimmer, K., 2004, 290). These elites invest heavily in their preferred network, never switch to other networks and interact with the members of other networks only in cases of "political emergencies" (Kudelia, S., 2010; Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015). That is, these elites are placed within the concentrated patronage system. The other group of regional elites, by contrast, has been historically placed within the diffused patronage system, the resources of which it can successfully exploit. This group of elites is never strongly attached to one patron, even when this patron is ideologically allied with these elites or is known to have provided them with considerable resources.

When the informal governing network changes in the centre, the elites in concentrated patronage regions open political opportunities for the types of protest that are in their interest in order to strike deals with the emerging patrons and retain their concentrated patronage system. By contrast, a polity characterised by diffused patronage would not experience conflict because diffused patronage polities are more adroit at adjusting to the changes of the informal governing networks. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the aspects of the independent variable, that is the nature of patronage in the regions, and how this independent variable emerged. In doing so, I engage the key concepts developed in the theory chapter and "actual acquaintance" in particular.

I first present Ukraine as a state of networks in order to highlight how volatile politics was in the centre. I define a "network" after Easter as "a nonkinship, informal association, within which exists group feeling and intimacy as well as group norms of behaviour" (Easter, 2000, 12). The centralised nature of Ukraine and its evolution into a state of networks acted as structural constraints on the regional elites. The second set of structural constraints is the nature of the political economy in the regions. These two structural constraints shaped the regions into diffused or concentrated patronage regions. The elites therefore functioned within a set of tight constraints shaped by the combination of the centralised nature of Ukraine and the nature of the regional political economy. Actual acquaintance of elites at different levels, which lies at the basis of Hale's concept of patronal politics, eased these structural constraints. I then discuss how the elites managed to secure resources for their regions under different governing networks and, in the following section, I discuss the aspects of elite survival through learning, especially in

diffused patronage politics. Finally, I discuss the time lag between the change of the governing network and the deal struck between the regions and the centre. I present how the elites in the concentrated patronage polity of Donetsk region developed a set of certain stable bargaining ploys, which helped them preserve their concentrated patronage system.

2. Ukraine as a state of networks

Despite being a unitary state²⁵³ with a strong centralising impulse,²⁵⁴ Ukraine has long been characterised as a “state of regions”. Gwendolyn Sasse describes Ukraine in the late 1990s – early 2000s as “a *regionalised* unitary state” (Sasse, 2002, 96). “Domestically,” she writes (2002, 69), “the disparities between the different territorial components – their ethnic, linguistic, religious and socio-economic cleavages, historical memories and different political and foreign policy orientations – make Ukraine’s single most important characteristic its construction as a state of regions”. Much has been made of these regional cleavages within Ukraine, as noted by Robert Kravchuk (Kravchuk, 1999) and, more recently, Paul D’Anieri (D’Anieri, 2006) (D’Anieri, 2007). Since its independence, Ukraine’s regional divisions, especially those between the east and the west, have affected electoral priorities of voters and electoral outcomes (Colton, 2011) (Copsey, 2008) (Osipian and Osipian, 2006) (Clem and Craumer, 2008) (Romanova, 2013); stark divisions of opinion on a variety of key subjects, such as the direction of economic development and relations with Russia and the West, existed between the people of the east and the people of the west of Ukraine. In parliamentary elections, specific political parties continued to win votes in the same regions, thus solidifying the electoral landscape (D’Anieri, 2007, 108). This continued well into the 2000s, so that by 2011, D’Anieri wrote: “Ukraine’s regional division appears stubborn and nearly unchanging,

²⁵³ Article 2 of the Ukrainian Constitution states that “Ukraine is a unitary state” (“Konstitutsiya” <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=254%EA%2F96%2D%E2%F0>). According to Sasse, this was a result of a deliberate political choice made in the capital in order to harness the regional potential for disintegration in the turbulent times of the economic crisis (Sasse, 2002, 70). For an exposition, see (Wolczuk, 2001).

²⁵⁴ In the early 1990s, Ukraine experimented with various types of regional self-government (Romanova, 2011). This changed under Kuchma, who, ironically, ran for presidency on the platform of federalisation and decentralisation. In a bid to establish greater control over regions and build a strong “vertical of power,” from 1996, Kuchma began appointing regional governors, in accordance with the Law on Power (1995). The Law also stipulated that he could dismiss governors for the violations of law or presidential decrees (Kravchuk, 1999, 167). The Law on Local Self-Government 1997 stipulated that the regional assemblies were to be directly elected (Sasse, 2002, 76). The new Budget Code of 2001 established a direct relationship between the state budget and the local budgets (region, city and district level budgets) in some regions. Previously, the regional budget would act as an intermediary between the state and the city budget when allocating subventions (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011, 21).

and the electoral map has changed only marginally” (D’Anieri, 2011, 28). According to the most recent research, regional divisions on the key subjects of economic development and relations with Russia and the West have smoothed out but still exist (Haran and Zolkina, 2017).

However, I argue here that characterising Ukraine as a “state of regions” conveys a certain sense of rigidity. This characterisation also conflates the interests of the national elites, local elites, and local people, obscuring the variables that are important for the outcomes of peace or conflict. As Brian Holden Reid has demonstrated in the case of the American Civil War, it is not the voter behaviour, which (I add) can be nearly unchanging over time, that produces wars (Reid, 1996, 11-12). He writes: “whatever the strength of political opinions, and electoral shifts of opinion, it is the *action* – the decisions taken by politicians – which determine the chain of circumstances that result in war or peace” (ibid., 115). In the Ukrainian case, the experimentations with the Ukrainian Constitution and division of powers that started in 2004 demonstrate that it gradually moved towards being “a state of networks”. Characterising Ukraine as a “state of networks” also goes a long way to explain, for example, President Viktor Yanukovych’s attempts to co-opt people from a variety of networks (but not the “most important rival network” of Yulia Tymoshenko (Hale, 2015, 234)) into the Party of Regions later into his presidency. In the long haul, it also explains the survival of Rinat Akhmetov, who miscalculated the radical protest potential during the crucial period of spring 2014 (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019), but finally managed to negotiate a deal with the new dominant network of Petro Poroshenko later into 2014 (Haran and Burkovsky, 2018). Therefore, I demonstrate that, instead of being a “state of regions,” over time, Ukraine evolved into a more flexible polity or a “state of networks”. According to Easter’s definition, a network is “a nonkinship, informal association, within which exists group feeling and intimacy as well as group norms of behaviour” (Easter, 2000, 12). Easter’s characterisation of how centre-periphery relations work in clientelistic polities is even more apt because it takes into account the perspectives of the regional elites (in Easter’s account the “provincial apparatchiki”): these personal networks connecting the centre and the region are “a power resource [providing] an informal social structure by which information [is] exchanged, resources [are] obtained, and collaborative actions [are] planned” (Easter, 2000, 11). Henry Hale, on whose theory of patronal politics I build the main argument of this dissertation, also converges on the view that, as other post-Soviet states, Ukraine has been governed by networks: “the collective

“actors” that actually wield the most influence in these countries... are precisely these extended informal networks, networks that constitute institutions in their own right...” (Hale, 2015, 95 – 96).

Since Leonid Kuchma’s centralising bid, the formal aspects of centre-periphery relations in Ukraine remained unchanged, that is regional governors continued to be appointed by Presidents while regional and city councils continued to be directly elected. However, to harness the potential for disintegration and forestall conflict, Ukrainian national elites started experimenting with the Constitution and the division of powers (more specifically, the executive branch of power) from roughly 2002, when President Kuchma drafted the changes to the Constitution to give more power to the Prime Minister and Parliament (Kudelia, 2008). From January 2006, spurred by the Orange Revolution and the elite compromise between the two opposing camps of Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich (Kudelia, 2007), some important changes began occurring at the national level that moved Ukraine towards a “state of networks” and had a lasting impact on the regional elites. To use Henry Hale’s terminology, Ukraine experienced alternating periods of “dominant chief executive” and “divided-executive,” which created certain structural constraints for the regional elites and moulded their regions into “diffused” or “concentrated” patronage regions.

The turmoil of the Orange Revolution resulted in an elite compromise, whereby the Prime Minister and Parliament were given more power at the expense of the President, ensuring that the eastern forces in the person of Yanukovich and the Party of Regions could “come back” (Kudelia, 2007) and be given a chance to exercise significant power in Ukrainian politics (Kudelia, 2010). More specifically, the Prime Minister was now appointed by Parliament rather than the President (Article 85. 12 of the Ukrainian Constitution from 01.01.2006; Hale, 2015, 77- 78) and the Cabinet could only be formed if there was a viable coalition in Parliament (Article 114 of the Ukrainian Constitution from 01.01.2006) (Copsey, 2008) (D’Anieri, 2006, 145). The Ministers in the Cabinet were now chosen by the Prime Minister rather than the President and appointed by Parliament (Article 85.12 of the Ukrainian Constitution from 01.01.2006).²⁵⁵ The changes fragmented the national system of patronage so that the President, Prime Minister, Cabinet of Ministers and the opposition forces became their own separate patrons. Thus, the

²⁵⁵ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80/ed20060101>

period between 2006 and late 2010 has been characterised as a period of “divided-executive,” during which the elites at both the national and regional level coordinated themselves around their preferred patrons.

How Ukraine moved towards the state of networks and how these different networks availed of these changes can be seen from the Cabinet appointments of specific Prime Ministers under this period of the divided-executive. In August 2006, Yanukovych headed the new parliamentary coalition and became the Prime Minister. Kudelia and Kuzio write on his government: “overall, 15 Cabinet positions were filled either with members of the Party of Regions or with Yanukovych’s loyalists, supporting the goal of distributing patronage” (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015, 262). Following the 2007 parliamentary election and the establishment of a coalition government by Yulia Tymoshenko’s Bloc BYUT and President Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine- People’s Self-Defence party (304, Copsey, 2008), Tymoshenko’s network (“the most powerful rival network’s chief patron” (Hale, 2015, 234)) similarly used the changes in the Constitution to its advantage. Thus, Tymoshenko’s second government was composed overwhelmingly of people from her own network. Oleksandr Turchynov, a member of BYUT, from Tymoshenko’s home town of Dnipropetrovsk, became the first deputy Prime Minister. Other key positions, that is the ministers most frequently lobbied by the regional governors and mayors, were occupied by people from either BYUT or Our Ukraine – People’s Self-Defence party. Iosif Vinskiy (Khmelnitska oblast), from BYUT, became the Minister of Transport and Communications; Bohdan Danilishin (BYUT) became the Minister of the Economy; Yuriy Lutsenko belonged to “Our Ukraine” party and came to occupy the position of the Minister of the Interior. Viktor Pynzenyk (BYUT) was promoted to the position of the Minister of Finance.²⁵⁶

From the regional elites’ point of view, this period of the divided-executive meant that whoever occupied the positions of the Prime Minister and the positions in the Cabinet – and therefore was responsible for the disbursement of key resources to the region, such as contracts to regional enterprises or subventions and equalisation grants to the regional budgets– was the first port of call.²⁵⁷ This worked particularly well

²⁵⁶ “Kto est’ kto v Kabmine novogo obraztsa”, *Status Quo*, 19 December 2007.

²⁵⁷ To illustrate the relative power advantage of Prime Ministers over Presidents when it came to regional policies, an example can be used. In May 2009, President Yushchenko sent a letter to Prime Minister Tymoshenko asking to provide funds for road repairs in Kharkiv in preparation for the football tournament Euro-2012. He was lobbied by

for the elites within the diffused patronage system who benefitted from their access to multiple patrons. For the elites in the concentrated patronage system, continued access to power by Yanukovych meant that the state was in relative balance as, if not in government, Yanukovych and his network could control the positions in Parliament, use the weakness of the Presidency (Hale, 2015, 327) and play Tymoshenko off Yushchenko (Hale, 2015, 330). This continuing access to power by Yanukovych meant that the positions of both economic and political elites in Donetsk region could stay secure. This explains why no significant switching to other networks among the elites took place in Donetsk region.

The changes made in the Constitution in 2006 and the multiple deadlocks in the centre (between the branches of the executive and legislature) worked in such a way as to ensure that Yanukovych and his network of the Party of Regions could return to power. Yanukovych demonstrated a capacity for concentration of patronage already under Kuchma's old presidentialist Constitution. When he became Prime Minister for the first time in November 2002, his "new Cabinet of Ministers included several other members of the Donetsk elite. Mykola Azarov, formerly the head of the state tax administration, was appointed first deputy prime minister and finance minister; Vitaliy Hayduk, a former director of Industrial Union of [Donbas], became the deputy prime minister for the fuel and energy complex" (Kovaleva, 2007, 64 – 65).

Thus in 2010, following his victory in the presidential elections, Yanukovych began consolidating power heavily in one chief executive and, in particular, in one – albeit significantly extended – network of the Party of Regions. Operating under the old divided-executive Constitution, Yanukovych "manoeuvred" his old acquaintance Mykola Azarov into the position of the Prime Minister (Hale, 2015, 343). One journalist described Azarov's Cabinet of Ministers as "a symbiosis of those who used to serve under Kuchma, key people from the Party of Regions, Lytvyn's Bloc and Communists".²⁵⁸ Thus, the deputy Prime Minister position was occupied by a Party of Regions' member Andriy Kliuev. The Minister of

Dobkin and Avakov. Presidents were generally lobbied by governors and mayors as a last resort. The Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers initiated government funding or contracts and then obliged various ministries, such as the Defence Ministry or the Ministry of Transport and Communications, to attend to the fulfilment of these and, importantly for state-owned enterprises, to cancel wage arrears. See "Riad ministerstv i vedomstv rasschitalis' s Khar'kovskim zavodom im. Malysheva posle poseshcheniia zavoda Prem'er-Ministrom Ukrainy Yu. Tymoshenko – V. Babaev", *Status Quo*, 1 August 2005. Yushchenko retained the veto power on privatisation.

²⁵⁸ "Kabmin Azarova: "Kaznograd", konferans'e, prodavets i drugie", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 11 March 2010.

Finance formerly worked closely with Azarov, whereas the Minister of the Interior was a former head of the police in Crimea and supervised Yanukovych's election campaign. The Minister of Industrial Policy, another key ministry frequently lobbied by regional governors, worked at Rinat Akhmetov's factories and was a deputy of the Party of Regions.²⁵⁹ Overall, there were no less than 10 representatives of the Donbas in the new government of Yanukovych. It was claimed that 14 out of 24/27 regions (this includes Kyiv, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol) were not represented at all in either Yanukovych's Presidential Administration or the Cabinet of Ministers.²⁶⁰ Yanukovych effectively restored the "patronal presidentialism," to use Hale's term, and gave the President even more power than under Kuchma's presidentialist Constitution of 1996. According to the new Constitution from 30.09.2010, the Parliament now approved rather than appointed the Prime Minister chosen by the President (Article 85.12) and the various committees, such as the Anti-Monopoly committee, were also approved by the Parliament but chosen by President (Article 85.24). The President now appointed the Prime Minister and the Cabinet (Article 106. 9 -10). We can therefore argue that the reason why Yanukovych's regime was "zlochinniy" (to use Ihor Kolomoisky's word, meaning "bad" in Ukrainian)²⁶¹ was not so much because of corruption but because of the systemic disequilibrium that he introduced with the dominant chief executive. In the section below, I explain why Yanukovych consolidated so much power in his own network.

3. Regional political economy

Thus, the changes on the national level created certain structural constraints for the local elites. More specifically, these changes forced the elites to coordinate around different patrons in order to accomplish several goals: retain their hold on power, keep their assets, and secure resources for both the region and themselves. This was not the only constraint on these elites. Given the stable nature of the formal centre-periphery relations, at the regional level whether a region developed into a concentrated or diffused patronage type of region depended largely on the nature of its political economy.

In formally centralised systems governed by informal networks, there is an important information exchange process going on between the centre and the region with the purpose of protecting regional

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ "Back to USSR", *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 March 2010.

²⁶¹ "Kolomois'skiy nazvav viinu na Donbasi "hromadians'kym konfliktom", *ZIK*, 2 May 2019.

property. Actual acquaintance between the patrons and clients in the regions serves as a means of protecting and monitoring large-scale regional property. In regions where large property (factories) is state-owned, patrons (Presidents) would appoint clients (governors) from competing networks in order to monitor the behaviour of clients from other networks. They do so in order to improve information flows between the centre and the region. In regions where large property is mostly private, the patrons would appoint clients that are agreed with the network dominant in the region (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019). Regions therefore would evolve into concentrated or diffused patronage regions depending on the nature of their political economy.

3.1. State-owned enterprises in diffused patronage regions

Historically, Kharkiv city evolved into a diffused patronage region because the biggest enterprises in the city, such as the military-oriented Malyshev plant,²⁶² the turbine-producer Turboatom, Elektrotiazhmash, Khimprom and the Kharkiv aviation plant, were state-owned. All of these plants depended on the decisions made by the ministries in Kyiv for their future development, including modernisation, government contracts supply, and, most importantly, cancellation of wage arrears to their employees.²⁶³ Importantly, these state-owned enterprises were not entangled in any subtle and complex commodity chains that would have made the region a concentrated patronage one. The economic development of these enterprises also depended on the lobbying prowess of the regional governors.

Due to the faltering economy at these enterprises, over time, Kharkiv city became very dependent on the centre (Activist in Kharkiv, interview 16 07 2019). These enterprises needed constant monitoring. The governors, mayors, and enterprise directors repeatedly acknowledged that these plants would not be able to survive without state support, particularly when it came to the cancellation of wage arrears.²⁶⁴ In fact, these plants were constantly in debt to their workers, the Pension Fund, and banks²⁶⁵ and needed the

²⁶² Valentin Badrak, "Krute pike bronetankobuduvannia", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 17 August 2001.

²⁶³ "Khar'kovskaia oblgosadministratsiia budet dobivat'sia vydeleniia v 2008 g. iz gosbiudzheta dlia khar'kovskogo aviazavoda 149 mln. grn. – pervyi vitse-gubernator", *Status Quo*, 23 December 2008.

²⁶⁴ "Odnim iz minusov svoei raboty za 2 goda A. Avakov schitaet to, chto ne udalos' stabilizirovat' deiatel'nost' zavoda im. Malysheva", *Status Quo*, 26 February 2007.

²⁶⁵ In 2008, 19 plants, 13 of which were state-owned, were on the verge of bankruptcy. By 2009, Malyshev plant, Kharkiv aviation plant and Khimprom were in a severe debt to the Pension Fund. See "Zadolzhennost' predpriatii Khar'kovskoi oblasti v Pensionnyi Fond sostavliaet 234 mln. grn. – nachal'nik oblastnogo upravleniia", *Status Quo*, 13 April 2009. By 2009, the Kharkiv aviation plant owed nearly 2 billion hryvnia to its creditors "Khar'kovskii aviazavod poluchil 112 mln. grn. iz stabilizatsionnogo fonda gosbiudzheta – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 25 June 2009.

centre to bail them out. No matter how much the state would disburse to these plants to cancel their arrears in any given month, arrears would continue to accumulate. As a result, these plants were always on the verge of bankruptcy, had it not been for the disbursements from the state budget. If the state failed to provide essential funds to these plants, they were subject to privatisation, which the local elites resisted.²⁶⁶ For example, in 2007, Khimprom required over 500 million hryvnia from the state budget to modernise; otherwise it was subject to privatisation.²⁶⁷ The problems at these plants were of such magnitude that the centre had to be heavily involved in helping manage them. For example, in November 2006, President Yushchenko took 10 major state-owned plants in Kharkiv under his protection.²⁶⁸ In January 2007, the committee of defense in the Verkhovna Rada took Elektrotiazhmash under its control.²⁶⁹

These plants, particularly the military-oriented Malyshev plant, were also dependent on the steady supply of government contracts, to provide work to their employees.²⁷⁰ Therefore, workers would be dependent for their livelihoods on the supply and fulfilment of contracts at these plants.²⁷¹ In some cases, workers raised complaints about the management to the regional administration's deputies and even protested; their complaints were delivered to the ministries by the regional governors.²⁷²

The regional governors and, to a lesser extent, city mayors therefore played a vital part in the functioning of these enterprises and acted as intermediaries between the enterprises and the centre (Activist in

²⁶⁶ The regional council's chairman Vasil' Salygin resisted the privatisation of Turboatom. See "Perevod "Turboatoma" iz pervoocherednogo spiska privatizatsii v obshchii spisok ne imeet bol'shogo znacheniiia – zamestitel' predsedatelia FGI", *Status Quo*, 27 February 2008. Turboatom and Elektrotiazhmash repeatedly came under raider attacks or were on privatisation lists both under Tymoshenko and Yanukovich "Yu. Tymoshenko vystupila protiv privatizatsii Khar'kovskogo "Elektrotiazhmasha" – nardep-Khar'kovchanin V. Kamchatnyi", *Status Quo*, 15 December 2008. Yushchenko vetoed the privatisation of Turboatom, and it was eventually removed from the privatisation list. Significantly, Turboatom was put on the privatisation list under Yanukovich but was later removed too. See "'Delo": spisok aktsii predpriatii, kotorye hochet prodat' Kabmin v etom godu. Sredi nikh – "Turboatom"', *Mediaport*, 16 January 2008; "Fond gosimushchestva ne planiruet prodavat' Khar'kovskii "Turboatom"', *Status Quo*, 18 March 2011.

²⁶⁷ "Arsen Avakov: dlia modernizatsii "Khimproma" neobhodimo polmilliarda griven"', *Mediaport*, 23 May 2007.

²⁶⁸ "Prezident Ukrainy voz'met pod svoi patronat 10 krupnykh predpriatii Khar'kovskoi oblasti", *Status Quo*, 3 November 2006

²⁶⁹ "Komitet Verkhovnoi Rady po voprosam natsional'noi bezopasnosti voz'met pod kontrol' problem razvitiia khar'kovskogo zavoda "Elektrotiazhmash" – A. Kinakh", *Status Quo*, 29 January 2007.

²⁷⁰ "O meste i roli tsirka v politike i obshchestvennoi zhizni", *Status Quo*, 1 October 2006.

²⁷¹ "A. Avakov obratilsia k prem'er-ministru Ukrainy s pros'boi predusmotret' v gosbiudzhete 2005 g. sredstva dlia prodolzheniia modernizatsii bronetankovoi tekhniki na zavode im. Malsheva", *Status Quo*, 21 February 2005.

²⁷² "Narodnye deputaty-khar'kovchane planiruiut obratit'sia k prem'er-ministru s pros'boi zashchitit' interest rabochikh zavoda im. Malysheva", *Status Quo*, 18 March 2009.

Kharkiv, interview 16 07 2019). For example, the governors often acted as intermediaries between banks, electricity suppliers, and the plants.²⁷³ The directors of the state-owned enterprises were subject to a close scrutiny by the governors. The governors initiated inspections of the enterprises, if the directors failed to cancel wage arrears or fulfil their contractual obligations.²⁷⁴ The governors often put pressure on directors to pay wages in a timely manner.²⁷⁵ Importantly, the governors could initiate a change of directors and they played an important role in how they were appointed (Activist in Kharkiv; Interview 16 07 2019). The governors would be responsible for nominating directors who would finally be appointed by the Ministry of Industrial Policy or the Ministry of Transport and Communications.²⁷⁶ Certain governors such as Avakov initiated the change of directors several times during their governorship.²⁷⁷ As a result, the governors in Kharkiv were dependent on the centre for the budgetary disbursements to and appointments of directors at the state-owned enterprises. Ultimately, the governors were answerable to the local population because workers depended for their livelihood on the smooth running of these enterprises, which the governors were responsible for.

The economic situation at these state-owned enterprises explains why Presidents, and especially Viktor Yushchenko, appointed clients from their preferred networks. The appointment of the trusted Avakov as governor, who was later made the head of Our Ukraine party's committee in Kharkiv, in a region heavily dominated by the Party of Regions meant that the behaviour of enterprise directors who were members of or leaned towards the Party of Regions could be monitored. This was confirmed to me in an interview with the Activist in Kharkiv (16 07 2019). He stated that "Yushchenko appointed Avakov to keep "the balance of power" in the region against the Party of Regions". The activist also stated that many enterprise directors were members of the Party of Regions. For example, in 2005 and 2007, Avakov initiated a change of director at Kharkiv metro which incurred the wrath of the Party of Regions'

²⁷³ "Khar'kovskaia oblgosadministratsiia budet dobivat'sia vydeleniia v 2008 g. iz gosbiudzheta dlia khar'kovskogo aviazavoda 149 mln. grn. – pervyi vitse-gubernator", *Status Quo*, 23 December 2008.

²⁷⁴ "Proverka deiatel'nosti gospredpriatii Khar'kovskogo regiona mozhet zakonchit'sia znachitel'nymi kadrovymi perestankami – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 11 April 2005.

²⁷⁵ "Zadolzhennost' po zarplate: ukaz est', zarplaty net!", *Mediaport*, 1 July 2002.

²⁷⁶ The centre got involved in the highly controversial case of the director appointment at Kharkiv metro. See "MediaPost on-line. Avakov ne ustupit mesto Fel'dmanu (ekskliuzivnoe interview)", *Mediaport*, 16 January 2008; The change of the director caused protests in February 2008 in Kyiv.

²⁷⁷ "Esli O. Kalashnikov ostanetsia v svoei dolzhnosti, ia podam v otstavku – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 25 August 2005.

members but led to certain improvements at the metro. Monitoring the situation at the regional enterprises through the governors also protest-proofed the politically explosive city of Kharkiv. Ultimately, it improved the transparency of information flows between the centre and the region.

3.2. Securing resources for these enterprises

One of the tasks of the regional elites was to secure resources for these enterprises. Due to the diffused nature of the regional patronage system, Kharkiv city was “plugged into” various patronage channels, especially during the period of the divided-executive (Interview with Activist in Kharkiv 16 07 2019). The elites therefore did not invest into any particular network as they relied on the past successes of exchange with multiple networks and benefitted from the rise of multiple patrons to the centre.²⁷⁸ There was therefore an expectation that when the governing network changes, the region would still continue accessing resources from the centre.

The governors, mayors, and enterprise directors repeatedly acknowledged that these enterprises would not be able to survive without state support, particularly when it came to wage arrears cancellation. Consequently, on their frequent trips to Kyiv, Kharkiv governors and, to a lesser extent, mayors persistently hammered this point home to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers.²⁷⁹ As it happened, the governor would often lobby the Prime Minister for him or her to issue a directive to the subordinate Ministries of Finance and Defence to finance these enterprises. These directives would then be discussed at the Verkhovna Rada to determine how much funding to allocate to the enterprises.²⁸⁰

How did the frequent and dramatic changes of the governing networks in Kyiv affect Kharkiv elites? It seems that for Kharkiv elites, due to this serious dependence of the regional enterprises on the centre, these changes did not matter much. In other words, regardless of who was in control of the centre, the

²⁷⁸ Traditionally, it can be noted that Kharkivites began to be occupying positions of power under the presidency of Yushchenko and premiership of Tymoshenko. A good example of this is Oleksandr Fel'dman who became a member of one of the Rada committees on humanitarian affairs under Tymoshenko and proposed a great deal of bills in the Rada. Neither Dobkin nor Kernes opposed the elevation of Feldman. In 2014, several Kharkivites, notably the ex-governor of Kharkiv Arsen Avakov, and Ivan Shvaika of Svoboda, were promoted to positions of significant power, with Avakov now occupying the Minister of the Interior post, and Shvaika occupying the significant for Kharkiv post of the Minister of Agriculture. Therefore, the governing network of Tymoshenko brought substantial benefits to Kharkivites in that they gradually came to occupy positions of power in the centre.

²⁷⁹ “Odnim iz minusov svoei raboty za 2 goda A. Avakov schitaet to, chto ne udalos' stabilizirovat' deiatel'nost' zavoda im. Malysheva”, *Status Quo*, 26 February 2007.

²⁸⁰ “A. Avakov obratil'sia k prem'er-ministru Ukrainy s pros'boi predusmotret' v gosbiudzhete 2005 g. sredstva dlia prodolzheniia modernizatsii bronetankovoi tekhniki na zavode im. Malysheva”, *Status Quo*, 21 February 2005.

state-owned enterprises in Kharkiv had to receive government funding and their debts had to be cancelled using government funds. The governors and city mayors lobbied the centre for this funding intensely; they were more active in their lobbying efforts when their preferred network was controlling the centre.²⁸¹ For example, when Tymoshenko became Prime Minister for the first time in 2005, Kharkiv city mayor Volodymyr Shumilkin and Kharkiv regional governor Arsen Avakov, both supporters of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, were very active in lobbying the new Prime Minister for her to provide funding for the Malyshev plant²⁸² and to continue providing funding for the building of the remaining stations of Kharkiv metro.²⁸³

Both Prime Ministers Tymoshenko and Yanukovich delivered or not on their promises to cancel arrears of these state-owned enterprises, modernise, and supply them with government contracts, regardless of politics.²⁸⁴ Both were lax in their first (or second for Yanukovich) years of premiership,²⁸⁵ only to learn from their mistakes and become more active in their policies towards Kharkiv later. During her second premiership, Tymoshenko visited Kharkiv in January 2009 and promised to supply Malyshev plant with government contracts to produce defence equipment; she also promised not to privatise Turboatom and give enough funding to Kharkiv metro.²⁸⁶ Following this trip, in February 2009, on Tymoshenko's initiative, the Cabinet of Ministers supplied around 40 million hryvnia to Kharkiv aviation plant to cancel wage arrears.²⁸⁷ In March 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers supplied Malyshev plant with enough government contracts to keep full employment.²⁸⁸ In April 2009, the plant received 136 million hryvnia from the Stabilisation Fund to cancel wage arrears and their debts to the Pension Fund.²⁸⁹ In July 2009,

²⁸¹ "Gosbiudzheth 2007 g. budet dlia Khar'kovskoi oblasti ne huzhe, chem predydushchii, v nekotorykh momentakh -dazhe luchshe – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 28 December 2007.

²⁸² "A. Avakov obratilsia k prem'er-ministru Ukrainy s pros'boi predusmotret' v gosbiudzhete 2005 g. sredstva dlia prodolzheniia modernizatsii bronetankovoi tekhniki na zavode im. Malysheva", *Status Quo*, 21 February 2005.

²⁸³ "Khar'kovskaia oblgosadministratsiia initsiiuet vydelenie iz gosbiudzheta 45 mln. grn. na stroitel'stvo metropolitena", *Status Quo*, 17 March 2005.

²⁸⁴ "Khar'kovskii aviazavod poluchil 112 mln. grn. iz stabilizatsionnogo fonda gosbiudzheta – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 25 June 2009; "Khar'kovskii zavod im. Malysheva polnost'iu pogasil zadolzhennost' po zarplate", *Status Quo*, 19 September 2007.

²⁸⁵ "Zadolzhennost' po zarplate na Khar'kovskom zavode im. Malysheva budet pogashena do kontsa sentiabria – V. Yanukovich", *Status Quo*, 16 August 2007.

²⁸⁶ "Aktsiia vstrechi, vosstavshie iz ada zastroishchiki i obeshchaniia prem'era", *Status Quo*, 23 March 2009.

²⁸⁷ "Khar'kovskomu aviazavodu vydeleno iz gosbiudzheta okolo 40 mln. grn. – oblgosadministratsiia", *Status Quo*, 9 February 2009.

²⁸⁸ "Kabmin planiruet zagruzit' khar'kovskii zavod im. Malysheva oboronnyim zakazom – Iu. Tymoshenko", *Status Quo*, 18 March 2009.

²⁸⁹ "Parlamentskie komitety po biudzhetu i finansam soglasovali vydelenie bolee 130 mln. grn. Khar'kovskomu zavodu im. Malysheva – D. Shentsev", *Status Quo*, 13 April 2009.

the ministries in Kyiv supplied the Kharkiv state aviation plant with government contracts.²⁹⁰ Finally, in summer of 2009 Kharkiv metro received 75 million hryvnia, the first significant government tranche since 2007, to build the remaining metro stations. According to my interview with the Activist in Kharkiv (16 07 2019), Tymoshenko used the wage arrears at Kharkiv enterprises to “force the directors who belonged to the Party of Regions to her side”.

The military-oriented Malyshev plant provides a good example of the effects of the frequent changes of the governing networks in the centre. The plant was among the most indebted enterprises in the region.²⁹¹ Wage arrears continued to accumulate at the plant, regardless of how many of the previous arrears were cancelled.²⁹² Even after the disbursement from the state budget to liquidate wage arrears in April 2009, these arrears still accumulated at the plant by September of the same year.²⁹³ The situation was quite dismal. Directors could be prosecuted for not paying to the Pension Fund,²⁹⁴ criminal proceedings could be opened against the enterprise, and it could be closed as a result. Yet, regardless of who controlled the centre, it seems that the disbursement of state funds was guided by the economic expediency rather than politics. By August 2005, Tymoshenko supplied government contracts to Malyshev plant and liquidated its wage arrears.²⁹⁵ She became more active in her Kharkiv policies only during her second premiership, however. In March 2009, for example, the Cabinet of Ministers disbursed of 92 million hryvnia to cancel the plant’s wage arrears and the debts to Pension Fund.²⁹⁶ Under Tymoshenko’s second premiership, Malyshev plant began producing the Oplot and Bulat tanks.²⁹⁷ This continued when Yanukovich became President.²⁹⁸ During his second premiership, Yanukovich did not fulfil the promise to cancel significant

²⁹⁰ “Kabmin prinial reshenie, obespechivaiushchie Khar’kovskii aviazavod sredstvami na dostroiku dvukh samoletov An-74 dlia Livii”, *Status Quo*, 6 July 2009.

²⁹¹ “Khar’kovskii aviazavod i zavod im. Malysheva v avguste narastili dolgi po zarplate”, *Status Quo*, 14 September 2010; “Za dva mesiatsa v Khar’kovskoi oblasti khotiat pogasit’ vsiu zadolzhennost’ po zarplate”, *Status Quo*, 26 January 2011.

²⁹² “Khar’kovskii zavod im. Malysheva pogasil svoiu zadolzhennost’ po zarplate”, *Status Quo*, 2 July 2009.

²⁹³ “Zadolzhennost’ po zarplate na ekonomicheski aktivnykh predpriiatiakh Khar’kovskoi oblasti sostavliaet 93, 5 mln. grn.”, *Status Quo*, 30 September 2009.

²⁹⁴ “Dolg Khar’kovskikh predpriatii Pensionnomu Fondu sostavliaet bolee 230 mln. grn. – zamgubernatora I. Shurma”, *Status Quo*, 20 May 2010.

²⁹⁵ “Kollektiv Khar’kovskogo zavoda im. Malysheva vyrazil blagodarnost’ Yu. Tymoshenko za okazannuiu pomoshch’ v likvidatsii zadolzhennosti po zarplate”, *Status Quo*, 25 August 2005.

²⁹⁶ “Kabmin planiruet zagruzit’ khar’kovskii zavod im. Malysheva oboronnyim zakazom – Yu. Tymoshenko”, *Status Quo*, 18 March 2009.

²⁹⁷ “Khar’kovskii zavod im. Malysheva v 2009 g. nachnet seriinoe proizvodstvo tankov “Oplot” – ministr prompolitiki”, *Status Quo*, 24 April 2009.

²⁹⁸ “Kabmin raspriadilsia vydelit’ 22 mln. grn. na finansirovanie podgotovki proizvodstva tanka “Oplot””, *Status Quo*, 13 March 2010

wage arrears at the plant.²⁹⁹ When he became President in 2010, the plant began receiving somewhat greater disbursements from the state fund than under Tymoshenko. It was also better supplied with government contracts and funds for modernisation projects, especially of the Oplot tanks.³⁰⁰ Overall, the situation at the plant improved marginally when Yanukovich became President. This was confirmed to me in an interview with Activist in Kharkiv (16 07 2019), who stated that under Yanukovich, “things run more smoothly”.

The governors rarely blamed politics for problems at these enterprises. In fact, I was able to detect only two cases when politics was explicitly blamed for under-financing of the plants. In July 2006, the Cabinet of Ministers suddenly stopped supplying funds to modernise Bulat tanks and cancel wage arrears at Malyshev plant.³⁰¹ This continued when Yanukovich became Prime Minister in August 2006. In October 2006, having tried all the usual lobbying channels, including the Cabinet of Ministers, without tangible results, the governor of Kharkiv Arsen Avakov vowed to sue the Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet of Ministers; he blamed politics for the lack of funds.³⁰² Later, when funding was resumed in October 2006,³⁰³ but arrears still accumulated at the plant, some of Avakov’s subordinates, such as Vasil’ Tretetskiy, a staunch opponent of the Party of Regions, promised to prosecute the Prime Minister Yanukovich under the Penal Code.³⁰⁴

Finally, perhaps realising the potential negative impact of the volatile changes in the centre, the governors sought to reduce their dependence on the centre through various ingenious schemes. One instance would serve as an example (the other example comes from the sphere of inter-budgetary relations which I discuss below). Kharkiv metro was highly dependent on the state for the building of the remaining

²⁹⁹ “Khar’kovskii aviazavod pogasil zadolzhennost’ po zarplate eshche na 2 mln. grn. – spetsializirovannaia nalogovaia inspektsiia v Khar’kove”, *Status Quo*, 10 September 2007.

³⁰⁰ “Vitse-prem’er A. Kliuev poobeshchal, chto Kabmin v blizhaishie tri mesiatsa vydelit bolee 350 mln. grn. Zavodu im. Malysheva”, *Status Quo*, 10 June 2010 ; “Khar’kovskomu zavodu im. Malysheva vydeleno 236 mln. grn. na proizvodstvo bronetekhniki – vitse-prem’er A. Kliuev”, *Status Quo*, 23 June 2010; “Minoborony zakazhet u zavoda im. Malysheva tanki “Bulat” i “Oplot” na 100 mln. grn.”, *Status Quo*, 25 March 2011.

³⁰¹ “Vydelit’ bolee 200 mln. grn. Zavodu im. Malysheva i “Khimpromu” oznachaet ikh proest’ – V. Salygin”, *Status Quo*, 12 October 2006.

³⁰² “O meste i roli tsirka v politike i obshchestvennoi zhizni”, *Status Quo*, 1 October 2006.

³⁰³ “A. Avakov v noiabre nameren snova dobivat’sia vozobnovleniia finansirovaniia goszakaza zavodu im. Malysheva”, *Status Quo*, 19 October 2006 ; “State Treasury Resumes Transfers To Malyshev Plant For Tank Modernization”, *Ukrainian News*, 19 October 2006,

³⁰⁴ “V. Tretetskiy predlozhit privilech’ prem’er-ministra i Minprompolitiki k ugovnoi otvetsvennosti za nevypolnenie obiazannosti v reshenii problem gospredpriatii”, *Status Quo*, 26 April 2007.

stations, and the demands of the regional governors in this regard continued to grow.³⁰⁵ The Cabinet of Ministers, regardless of who was in power, frequently failed to provide enough funding to the metro.³⁰⁶ The building works were on hold for many years and only activated in 2007 when the subvention for the building works was received from the state budget.³⁰⁷ To reduce their dependence on the centre, the city mayor Dobkin initiated making the metro communal property in 2008, so that the greater bulk of the funding would come from the city and regional budget.³⁰⁸ Thus, the local elites in Kharkiv strived to reduce their dependence on the centre by generating other sources of funding for the state-owned enterprises, including Kharkiv metro (Activist in Kharkiv, interview 16 07 2019).

3.3. Private enterprises in concentrated patronage systems³⁰⁹

Donets'k region evolved into a concentrated patronage region partially due to its geographical location but also for deeper reasons. As Kerstin Zimmer demonstrates, this was the result of how the Soviet system of centralised planning operated in that by the time of Ukrainian independence the region had inherited a small number of heavy industries (Zimmer, 2004). The region, therefore, was politically, economically and cognitively “locked in” (Swain and Mykhnenko, 2007, 36): the elites clung onto these largely obsolete industries because there were no alternatives; seeking alternatives would have resulted in a social explosion (as the regional history demonstrated numerous times in the cases of miners’ strikes (Swain, 2007)).

The painful economic transition in the 1990s meant that the elites had to protect the industries which were responsible for sustaining the region on even keel. These were primarily energy and metallurgy. Swain and Mykhnenko estimate that by the end of 2003, the Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita was above the national average in Donets'k (Swain and Mykhnenko, 2007, 20). They document how this

³⁰⁵ “V. Salygin predlozhl napisat’ pis’mo prem’eru i prezidentu Ukrainy s pros’boi vydelit’ sredstva na stroitel’stvo Khar’kovskogo metropolitena”, *Status Quo*, 7 February 2008

³⁰⁶ Equally, Tymoshenko, Yanukovich and Azarov were anxious to supply Kharkiv metro with funding. In 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers disbursed of 75 million hryvnia. See “Kabmin vydelit 50 mln. grn. na stroitel’stvo st. “Aleksievskaiia” Khar’kovskogo metro”, *Status Quo*, 10 June 2010. In 2011 it was 100 million. “V avguste-sentriabre na stroitel’stvo khar’kovskogo metro iz gosbiudzheta postupit 100 millionov griven”, *Status Quo*, 29 July 2011

³⁰⁷ “M. Dobkin obvinil Khar’kovskuiu oblgosadministratsiiu v sabotazhe stroitel’stva metro”, *Status Quo*, 23 January 2008.

³⁰⁸ “V. Salygin predlozhl napisat’ pis’mo prem’eru i prezidentu Ukrainy s pros’boi vydelit’ sredstva na stroitel’stvo Khar’kovskogo metropolitena”, *Status Quo*, 7 February 2008.

³⁰⁹ I made a decision not to recite the statistics on the political economic make up of the region. For statistics, see (Kovaleva, 2007).

value and production picked up after 2002 (ibid.,25). This performance, they write, was largely determined by the primary sector (coal and energy) (ibid., 24). Moreover, it was geographically bound to Donetsk city and Mariupol (ibid., 33). Over time, therefore, the region became more dependent on energy, metallurgy, and other heavy industrial sectors (Swain, 2007, 2). The elites concentrated patronage in order to preserve this growth and insulate these industries from the volatile politics in the centre. They therefore developed a vested interest in keeping the concentrated patronage system. This was confirmed to me in the interview with Journalist 1, an expert on Donetsk region, who stated that the centre never appointed a governor who was at variance with the regional elites, thus preserving the concentrated patronage system (19 07 2019).

Why the region evolved into a concentrated patronage region also depended on the nature of the enterprises themselves. Unlike in Kharkiv, in Donetsk tightly linked commodity chains largely based on coal, such as “coal-metals”, meant that the enterprises were susceptible to vertical and horizontal integration (Swain and Mykhnenko, 2007, 37)(for the purpose of price control, so that prices could be set arbitrarily and not conform to market or government-set prices, which led to the cross-subsidisation of enterprises) and monopolisation. This made the economy region-based and prevented businesses from other regions from establishing presence in the region (ibid.). These commodity chains “concentrated profits in the hands of the regional FIGs which then used to finance capital investment” (Lyakh, 2007, 90). An attempt to introduce a certain degree of political diffusion later in the 2000s via Serhiy Taruta who was reportedly “Bat’kivshchina’s bankroller” (Hale, 2015, 333) backfired because he became involved in a commercial conflict with Akhmetov (Interview with Journalist 1, 16 07 2019). Taruta therefore diffused his assets towards other regions and countries rather than keeping them region-based but he was politically marginalised. By 2014, he was virtually bankrupt, according to Journalist 1 (19 07 2019).

“Clan behaviour” therefore can be explained by the desire to protect large-scale regional property and secure control over a potentially socially explosive region (due to the presence of workers in obsolete industries). Concentrating patronage through actual acquaintance worked to protect regional property. This also explains the closed configuration of power rotation in the region, whereby key positions in the region’s government were occupied by people who maintained close connections with each other

(Interview with Journalist 1 16 07 2019). According to Journalist 1, the regional governors appointed by the centre in Donetsk always had good knowledge of the regional economy and sported deep connections with the region. After 2002, actual acquaintance via Yanukovych and other members of the Party of Regions worked to preserve the balance in the centre (Activist from Donetsk, Interview, 27 07 2019). However, every time the informal network changed in the centre, the elites had to negotiate a favourable deal with the centre to preserve their concentrated patronage system and keep access to power. Closed power configuration continued when Yanukovych became President. In effect, it lengthened the elites' expectations that Yanukovych would continue accessing resources in the centre.

The elites in Donetsk, therefore, relied on the past successes of exchange with Yanukovych and a group of people close to him, such as Volodymyr Rybak and Rinat Akhmetov. All of them developed close ties with each other at the end of the 1990s. Over time, Yanukovych became the region's most important political patron, connecting the centre and the region. When Yanukovych, who by the time of his appointment as governor in 1997 had already been "deeply involved in local business circles" (Zimmer, 2004, 275), was governor of the Donetsk region (1997 – 2002), he contributed to the socio-economic development of the region in many ways (Swain and Mykhnenko, 2007, 8). Swain and Mykhnenko write on Yanukovych: "the most significant governor appointment was of Viktor Yanukovych in 1997, who went on to create a political context in which the "clans" and specifically Industrial Union of the Donbas and System Capital Management could expand their operations without fearing punitive and arbitrary interference from the political authorities in Kyiv" (ibid., 39). Under Yanukovych, the elites secured a favourable economic deal with the centre through the establishment of a free economic zone in 1998 which exempted the enterprises from tax for five years. Yanukovych was the head of the Council of Special Economic Zones, responsible for the enterprises (Zimmer, 2004, 276).

As Zimmer highlights in her work, those who contributed to the development of the region were most trusted. Volodymyr Rybak, who in 2010 joined Yanukovych's Presidential Administration, was in the Soviet times the head of the executive committee in one of Donetsk city districts and then mayor in 1998. Rybak was "political patron both to businesses and to the general population and has "helped the city"" (Zimmer, 2004, 281). Rybak was the founder of the Party of Regions. Power then rotated in the closed configuration among people connected to Yanukovych, such as Yanukovych's deputy Anatoly

Blizniuk, who later became governor of Donetsk region. As Journalist 1 stated in the interview with me, the appointment of Volodymyr Logvinenko, a compromise figure between the region and the centre, as governor by President Yushchenko in 2006 led to the “most peaceful times in Donetsk”. “Logvinenko had deep connections to the region,” Journalist 1 says, “he was a diplomat and was later offered a job at one of Akhmetov’s consultancies”. “Yushchenko consulted Yanukovich and the Respected One (Shanovnyi – i.e. Rinat Akhmetov) on the subject whether this person would be an effective governor. Logvinenko was suitable for the president because he was a suitable figure both for Donetsk, Yekhanurov, and other political actors”, writes a journalist on this.³¹⁰

This pattern of concentrated patronage, based on the protection of the key commodity chains, such as “coal-metal,” and closed rotation of power, whereby the people who rose to power had to have close acquaintance with each other explains how and why Rinat Akhmetov emerged as the most important financial patron of the Donetsk clan. Already in 1997, in a widely cited interview, Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko stated that Akhmetov “upheld the entire Donetsk region”.³¹¹ By the mid-2000s, System Capital Management, Akhmetov’s main holding, included more than 30 companies in a sprawling variety of spheres, such as metallurgy, energy (coal mining), banking, insurance,³¹² local press and Shakhtar football club.³¹³ The holding controlled the entire economy of the Donbas through shares, and its “empire” continued to grow year on year.³¹⁴ By 2009, his holdings controlled the most profitable enterprises across the entire region, such as Azovstal’, Horlivka machine building factory, and Makiivka metallurgy plant. By 2011, in a major privatisation bid, Akhmetov’s holding Metinvest bought 75% of shares in Mariupol’s Il’ich metallurgical plant.³¹⁵ Compared to the state mines, Akhmetov’s mines continued to be financially sound: Akhmetov’s coal mining and metallurgy assets were only slightly affected by the crisis of 2008 – 2009 and the first to recover.³¹⁶ By contrast, state mines were continuously experiencing problems with wage arrears and modernisation.³¹⁷ Akhmetov also employed a greater

³¹⁰ Serhiy Garmash, “Novyi gubernator Donbasu. Suto muzhits’kyi rozrakhunok”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 19 May 2006.

³¹¹ “Tumannist’ Yanukovicha”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 25 June 2004.

³¹² Ihor Maskalevich, “SKM: vidtrytiti kompanii, shcho vvazhae sebe patriotom”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 6 May 2005.

³¹³ “Berliner Zeitung: krestnyi otets Donbassa”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 18 February 2005.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ “Boiko rozpoviv, chomu zavod ‘Il’icha’ bulo prodano Akhmetovu”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 14 January 2011.

³¹⁶ “Akhmetov kupil Makeevskii metallurgicheskii zavod”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 October 2010.

³¹⁷ “Mer Donetsk’a obsudil s Yanukovichem sud’bu ‘Topaza’ i smenu sobstvennika Donetskoi Shakhty”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 15 May 2002.

number of people than any other employer in the region.³¹⁸ Aslund calls System Capital Management the biggest company in Ukraine already in 2004, with about 160,000 employees (Aslund, 2006, 17). By 2014, Akhmetov's businesses employed about 300,000 people.³¹⁹ Thus, journalists were not entirely off the mark when calling Akhmetov "the godfather of the Donets'k clan [or king of Donets'k]" (Aslund, 2006, 17).³²⁰

Despite not being a "professional politician," Akhmetov threw his lot with the Party of Regions since its incipience and provided critical financial resources to the party, more so during the elections (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015, 264). Akhmetov later became a deputy of the Party of Regions, albeit he was the most notorious absentee during the Rada sessions. In 2008, Akhmetov controlled more than half of the local party organisations.³²¹

Akhmetov therefore became the major employer, the most reliable tax payer, and the major benefactor in the region. Over time the regional governors, the regional council deputies, and the long-serving mayor of Donets'k Oleksandr Luk'yanchenko became dependent on him. This was confirmed to me in an interview with Journalist 1 (19 07 2019). As one journalist put it in November 2003, in Ukraine "the electoral preferences [of the population] were shaped by the preferences of the local elites, while the preferences of the local elites were shaped by the preferences of the local business".³²² Both governors Anatoliy Blyzniuk (2002 – 2005; 2010 - 2011) and Andriy Shyshatskiy (2011 – 2014), as well as Donets'k mayor Luk'yanchenko (2002 – 2014), repeatedly expressed their loyalty to Akhmetov in interviews.³²³ There were several reasons for this. Firstly, both the city and the regional budgets were dependent on local income tax; the city and region authorities were also responsible for collecting profit tax. As the main employer and the owner of the most profitable enterprises in the region, Akhmetov therefore was

³¹⁸ "Ukraine oligarch campaigns to save his country", *Deutsche Welle*, 21 May 2014,; "Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Supplement: Donets'k - Industry - Listening to the locals", *Foreign Direct Investment*, 1 December 2012, As of 2013, "DTEK is the largest energy company in Ukraine. It is part of the financial and industrial group System Capital Management (SCM). Currently, DTEK employs 140 thousand people." "DTEK Finance B.V. DTEK Announces 1H2013 results conference-call", *Regulatory News Service*, 13 September 2013,

³¹⁹ "Exit Polls Say Poroshenko Wins Ukraine Presidency", *Radio Free Europe Documents and Publications*, 25 May 2014,

³²⁰ "Akhmetov: Ukraine's 'oligarch-in-chief' and top powerbroker", *Agence France Presse*; "Berliner Zeitung: krestnyi otets Donbassa", *Novosti Donbassa*, 18 February 2005.

³²¹ "Politicheskaia rol' i ekonomicheskie interesy Rinata Akhmetova", *Novosti Donbassa*, 21 January 2008.

³²² Serhiy Rakhmanin, "'Razvod' po-Donets'ki", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 7 November 2003.

³²³ "Svoi sredi svoikh. Interv'iu s gubernatorom Donets'koi oblasti", *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 July 2010; "Mer Donets'ka rasskazal, chto kompanii Akhmetova platiat bol'she vsego nalogov v biudzheth goroda", *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 April 2013.

the major tax payer.³²⁴ He was also continually recognised by both mayor and governor as the most compliant tax payer in the region.³²⁵ Not only that, since 2006, Akhmetov had been the most significant charity donor in the region.³²⁶ In July 2006, the city council bestowed the title of the “honorary citizen of Donets’k” upon him for his charity work and employment policies.

When Yanukovych became President, the pattern of rotating power in closed configuration around a small group of people continued, lengthening the elites’ expectations about the viability of the regime. Akhmetov continued to be the most significant financial patron of the Party of Regions, and by 2011, his influence was firmly entrenched in the regional council, with the former employees of his major holding Metinvest staffing the council³²⁷ and with the newly appointed governor Andriy Shyshatskiy being his representative. Journalist 1 confirmed the following curious statistics to me in an interview: “In the regional council, Akhmetov’s group represented the percentage of seats in accordance with how many work places he controlled. I counted them: this was 30%. The rest were divided between different groups, therefore, making Akhetmov’s group the most influential. Because the headquarters of Akhmetov’s enterprises were in Donets’k city, he held most influence in the city council and, in particular, on the mayor Luk’yanchenko”. Journalist 1 also confirmed the connection between Akhmetov and the new governor, Andriy Shyshatskiy, who was formerly the director of Khartsyzk Pipe Plant belonging to Metinvest Holding. He then became the director of Pharmacy Donbass, which sold all of its shares to Akhmetov’s holding System Capital Management.³²⁸ Matsuzato (2017, 182) writes on this clientilistic connection between Akhmetov and Shyshatskiy: “The Oblast Rada [regional council] filled the vacancy of its chairman after Blyznyuk’s promotion by electing [Andriy Shyshatskiy], president of the Pharmacy of Donbass, which benefited from monopolistic contracts for supplying medicines to state pharmacies and

³²⁴ “Na kogo postavit Akhmetov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 March 2009.

³²⁵ “Svoi sredi svoikh. Interv’iu s gubernatorom Donets’koi oblasti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 July 2010; “Mer Donets’ka rasskazal, chto kompanii Akhmetova platiat bol’she vsego nalogov v biudzheth goroda”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 April 2013.

³²⁶ “Akhmetov podaril Donets’ku 12 mln. grn dlia vyzadki derev’ev”, *Novosti Donbassa*. In 2010, the funding of various city projects was dependent on the oligarchs such as Boiko and Akhmetov. The head of the Donets’k Committee of Voters Serhiy Tkachenko commented that in Mariupol the city bureaucrats were spending more time at Ilyich metallurgical plant than in their cabinets. The major enterprises continued to be the major donors to the city budget. Yevhen Shibalov, “Manual po biudzhetu, abo malen’kii krok nazustrich”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 25 July 2010.

³²⁷ It was important for Akhmetov to control these posts because the council was responsible for the ecology in the region and the extraction of natural resources. See Yevhen Shibalov, “Korporokratiiia po-donets’ky. Dikty, topy ta “potribni liudi””, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 19 November 2010.

³²⁸ ““SKM” skontsentrirovala 99,8% “Farmatsii Donbassa””, *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 September 2010.

hospitals. [Shyshatskiy] may have been elected as the regional Rada chair as a reward for selling a significant portion of the stock of his pharmacy company to Akhmetov's System Capital Management in the same year".³²⁹ For his entire governorship, Shyshatskiy did not interfere with the economy of the region, in fact supporting the privatisation of mines.

Any change of the governing network in the centre affected Donetsk's elites. In contrast with Kharkiv, for Akhmetov and the "clan" the frequent changes in Kyiv had tangible consequences. This was particularly true when the rival network of Yulia Tymoshenko was involved. When Tymoshenko was deputy Prime Minister in 2000, she sought to reform the coal industry which would have made mines independent actors on the market, effectively endangering the key commodity chains on which the Donetsk's clan was reliant (Bogatov, 2007, 133). The Donetsk's clan succeeded in having her replaced, as Zimmer writes (Zimmer, 2004, 326). After the Orange Revolution, the incumbent President Yushchenko made a list of oligarchs and party functionaries subject to inspection and lustration. These included Akhmetov.

Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko sought to revise the privatisation deals, do away with corruption, force the key oligarchs to pay taxes and retain the money they earned in Ukraine rather than transfer it to offshore zones (Kudelia, 2012, 423) (Markus, 2015, 50).³³⁰ In 2005 the Presidential Administration subjected the Ministry of the Interior to a considerable pressure to find breaches of law in the business activities of Akhmetov.³³¹ In September of the same year, the State Property Fund announced the inspection of privatization of Akhmetov's factories, such as Horlivka and Druzhkovka machine-building factories. In March 2005, Akhmetov's close friend Borys Kolesnikov was arrested on extortion charges. Akhmetov was therefore forced to spend several months abroad to avoid possible arrest. He only returned following the memorandum between Yushchenko and Yanukovich in September 2005.

It is quite possible that Yushchenko took these measures against Akhmetov involuntarily but was rather forced by Tymoshenko, whose relationship with Akhmetov was that of enduring enmity. In fact, there is some evidence that Yushchenko began negotiating with Akhmetov to compete electorally with the Social Democratic Party long before the Orange Revolution, since 2002.³³² There was even a

³²⁹ See also "'Farmatsiia Donbassa" perekhodit pod polnyi kontrol' "SKM'", *Novosti Donbassa*, 12 February 2010.

³³⁰ "Der Standard: "Ukrainskoe pravitel'stvo poshlo protiv oligarkhov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 12 April 2005.

³³¹ "Yushchenko "naezhal" na Akhmetova dlia sponsirovaniia zheny i docheri?", *Ukrayynska Pravda*, 13 June 2011.

³³² Yevhen Shybalov, "Razvod" po-donets'ki", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 7 November 2003.

possibility of the Party of Regions joining Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" at one point in the early 2000s.³³³

Following the initial backlash against Akhmetov, by 2008, an informal coalition existed between Akhmetov and Yushchenko, thereby Yushchenko protected Akhmetov's assets against Tymoshenko's reprivatisation drive. At the same time, the enduring enmity between Tymoshenko and Akhmetov and not between the latter and Yushchenko meant that under Tymoshenko, Akhmetov's assets were constantly in danger, he could not progress with further privatisation, and his business projects were stalled. Under Tymoshenko, Akhmetov's important oil and gas project Vanco Prikerchenska (initiated during Yanukovych's government) was put to a halt, following the ruling of the Ministry of Ecology.³³⁴

By contrast, having a trusted friend (albeit with whom one's relationship was complex) controlling the centre, benefitted Akhmetov greatly. When Yanukovych became Prime Minister, Akhmetov's assets grew and expanded beyond Donetsk, and in August 2007 he acquired the company "Dnieproenergo," which Tymoshenko vowed to nationalise. When Yanukovych became President, Akhmetov's companies "received exclusive treatment in tender distribution, subsidy provision and major privatisation deals, and won nearly half of all state-procurement contracts in 2012 and 2013" (Kudelia, 2014e, 26).³³⁵ In August 2011, as a result of the renewed privatisation drive, Akhmetov received four Donetsk mines³³⁶ and in the same year, the state began buying coal from Akhmetov as a matter of priority.³³⁷ In 2011, Akhmetov became the owner of the Horlivka machine building plant³³⁸ and in February of the same year, the Cabinet of Ministers³³⁹ allowed the project Vanco Prikerchenskaya stalled by the former Prime Minister

³³³ Ibid

³³⁴ "Na kogo postavit Akhmetov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 March 2009.

³³⁵ The relationship between Akhmetov and Yanukovych was always complex. Many journalists argued that Yanukovych was distancing himself from Akhmetov and acting more and more independently from him from 2009. It was said that Yanukovych was falling under the influence of the "gas lobby" of Lyovochkin-Firtash than the Donetsk lobby of Akhmetov-Kolesnikov. See "Yanukovych snova ispugalsia Akhmetova", *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 October 2008. When Yanukovych became President in 2010, the influence of Lyovochkin-Firtash grew. There were rumours in the press that Akhmetov was considering providing resources to parties other than the Party of Regions.

³³⁶ "4 Donetsk Shakhty otoidut k Akhmetovu?", *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 August 2011.

³³⁷ "Gosudarstvo kupilo u Akhmetova uglia na 1.3 mlrd. grn.", *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 February 2011.

³³⁸ "Akhmetov zakrepliaetsia v gornom mashinostroenii", *Novosti Donbassa*, 2 February 2012.

³³⁹ It was now composed of the people loyal to Akhmetov. To make sure his business plans went forward, Akhmetov promoted his closest associate in the region, Borys Kolesnikov, to the post of the head of Anti-Monopoly Committee in Yanukovych's government. Kolesnikov also headed the Ministry of Ecology and the State Property Fund and was responsible for the Euro-2012 preparations. Kolesnikov thus controlled the financial flows for the modernisation of airports, construction works and road repairs in Donetsk. The new coal minister Yuriy Yashchenko appointed Yuri Cherednichenko who headed the coal extraction department in DTEK as his deputy. Akhmetov's group received control over the National Commission regulation of Electricity and Energy.

Tymoshenko to go forward.³⁴⁰ In January 2012, DTEK became a shareholder in Donets'koblenergo.³⁴¹

By 2012, 47,5% of coal mining volume in the country was controlled by Akhmetov's System Capital Management.³⁴²

In summary, both regions developed along the paths of either diffused or concentrated patronage depending on the nature of their political economies. Actual acquaintance between patrons and clients ensured that large-scale regional property was protected. In a classic diffused patronage region of Kharkiv, enterprises were state-owned and needed constant monitoring from the centre. As a result, governors from competing networks were appointed by the centre in order to monitor the enterprises. The region was "plugged into" various patronage channels in that it benefitted from access to multiple patrons. In Donets'k, by contrast, large-scale private property was protected through concentrated patronage. Power rotated in a closed configuration among a small group of people and the region benefitted from the rise of one patron to the centre.

4. Actual acquaintance and securing resources for the region

Accessing budgetary resources to distribute to the region was one of the most important priorities of the local elites. Local elites were responsible for channelling subsidies to the local population, providing resources for social and cultural programmes, supporting various vulnerable groups of people, such as veterans and the disabled, and maintaining the infrastructure in the regions. All of this could be accomplished using the region's own as well as government resources, such as equalisation grants and subventions. Significantly, cutting subsidies to the local population had a direct relation with the protest potential in the regions, as the large-scale protest of Chernobyl veterans demonstrated in Donets'k in 2011. In Kharkiv, too, ordinary people continually scrutinised how the elites managed the regional budget.

Kharkiv and Donets'k regions differed in their inter-budgetary relations with the centre. I demonstrate in this section that Kharkiv region's and city's relations with the centre in the budgetary sphere were more

³⁴⁰ "Zavtra Kabmin poidet na "mirovuiu" s Akhmetovym", *Novosti Donbassa*, 8 February 2011.

³⁴¹ "Akhmetov kupil "Donets'koblenergo"", *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 January 2012.

³⁴² "Dolia DTEK v ugledobyche Ukrainy prevysila 47%", *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 April 2012.

stable. By contrast, Donetsk's relations with the centre in the budgetary sphere were more volatile when the rival informal governing network of Yulia Tymoshenko was controlling the centre. This created greater incentives for the elites to press for federalisation and clandestinely finance separatism in 2014.

In this section I focus on the budgetary issues that concerned the local elites as reported in the press. For Kharkiv's regional elites state subventions were the most important aspect of the inter-budgetary relations between the region and the centre. According to the new Budget Code 2001, the centre now had direct relationship with the regional, city and district budgets (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011, 22).

Therefore, the intergovernmental transfers were made to and from the regional, city and district budgets separately. According to Article 2.37 of the Budget Code, state subventions were intergovernmental transfers with a purpose.³⁴³ Due to the sheer amount of subventions, here I consider three types of subventions: subsidies for poor families with children (*poor families*) and subsidies that covered utility payments (*subsidy 1* and *subsidy 2*). These were the subventions that were covered in the local press. I also consider the so-called equalisation grants (дотація вирівнювання). This was an unconditional or non-targeted transfer to finance the so-called “delegated expenditure tasks” which “involved the provision of so-called soft, or people-related, public services such as education, health and social protection” (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011 23). As Martinez-Vazquez and Thirsk write, “these tasks, in which there is a national interest at stake, are delegated by the State to local budgets” (ibid.). These equalisation grants were important for the elites in Donetsk.

4.1. Diffused patronage region

As Donetsk, Kharkiv region and city were budgetary donors, that is they contributed to the state budget more than they retained. In 2002, for example, the region transferred around 60% of the taxes it collected to the recipient (or subvention-dependent) regions in Ukraine.³⁴⁴ At the time, throughout the entire period prior to the Maidan of 2013, neither the mayors nor regional governors (nor in fact the two directors of the Kharkiv region and city finance departments who commented on the budgets most often

³⁴³ “Biudzhetni kodeks Ukrainy”, *Zakon.Rada*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2456-17>.

³⁴⁴ “Marina Vishnevskaya: “Khar'kovskaia oblast' sredi oblastei Ukrainy zanimaet vtoroe mesto po dokhodam i 25-e – po rashodam”, *Status Quo*, 22 November 2002.

in interviews),³⁴⁵ apart from the governor Yevhen Kushnaryov,³⁴⁶ made much of a political point of this situation, as opposed to the mayors and governors of the Donetsk region.

As in Donetsk, lobbying for a better budget took place on a variety of levels, with both the mayors Shumilkin and Dobkin and governors Avakov and later Dobkin involved. Since it was the Cabinet of Ministers who proposed the budget to the Verkhovna Rada, the governors and mayors lobbied the Cabinet of Ministers and the Prime Minister as a priority,³⁴⁷ followed by budgetary committees and the Ministry of Finance (Article 37 of the Budget Code). Often the state budget discussed in the Rada did not allocate funds to Kharkiv projects, such as the building of the Kharkiv metro.³⁴⁸ However, after lobbying by the governors, the Rada often reconsidered the budget and supplied what they wanted. For example, in 2004, the Rada failed to allocate enough funds to finance over 100 social programmes, including subsidies to the local population in Kharkiv. The governor Kushnaryov asked Kharkiv deputies to propose the issue in the Rada.³⁴⁹ Following this, the Ministry of Finance increased the amount of state budget transfers to Kharkiv by 80 million hryvnia.³⁵⁰ Similarly, in 2009, no funds were allocated to the building of Kharkiv metro by the Rada, but the region received 75 million hryvnia after Avakov's intercession.³⁵¹ Lobbying for a better budget was similar to lobbying for funding for the regional enterprises in that when a favoured informal governing network was controlling the centre, the governors and mayors lobbied it with a greater zeal. For example, when Yanukovych became President and the Party of Regions supporters Dobkin and Kernes were in control of the region and the city, in many budgetary reports from the years 2010 to 2013, it was noted that "the city authorities expected to

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ "Khar'kovskaia oblast' obdelena sredstvami v proekte gosbiudzheta na 2003 g. – E. Kushnarev", *Status Quo*, 2 September 2002.

³⁴⁷ "Postoiannaia komissii obshchego obshchestvennogo razvitiia rassmotrela na svoem zasedanii itogi ispolneniia biudzheta za pervyi kvartal 2002 g.", *Status Quo*, 7 May 2002.

³⁴⁸ "Khar'kovskii metropoliten peredan v kommunal'noi sobstvennost' Khar'kova – Yu. Tymoshenko", *Status Quo*, 27 August 2009.

³⁴⁹ "Ob'em biudzheta Khar'kovskoi oblasti, zalozhennyi v projekt gosbiudzheta-2005, men'she neobkhodimogo pochni na 1 mlrd. grn. – E. Kuz'kin", *Status Quo*, 6 September 2004.

³⁵⁰ "Ministerstvo finansov Ukrainy uvelichilo predpolagaemye otchisleniia v biudzheta Khar'kovskoi oblasti 2005 g. na 80 mln. grn.", *Status Quo*, 21 September 2004.

³⁵¹ "Kabmin vydilil 75 mln. grn. na stroitel'stvo metro v Khar'kove", *Status Quo*, 31 August 2009.

receive more from the state”. In April 2012, for example, the Party of Regions deputy Valery Pisarenko lobbied the Prime Minister Azarov to allocate an unprecedented 825 million hryvnia to Kharkiv.³⁵²

Kharkiv city and region became dependent on government’s subventions rather than equalisation grants. Subventions were the most important aspects of the budget discussed in the local press.³⁵³ Subventions were primarily allocated to financing the building of the remaining Kharkiv metro stations and various subsidies to the city population.³⁵⁴ Overall, the level of subventions allocated to Kharkiv increased incrementally over the years.³⁵⁵ The changing governing networks in the centre did not seem to affect the allocation of subventions from the year 2003 to 2009. Under Tymoshenko, subventions were received on time; in nearly all cases, subvention plans were complete at 88 to 90%. The table below illustrates this point.

³⁵² “Nardep V. Pisarenko obratilsia k prem’er-ministru s predlozheniem vydelit’ Khar’kovu pochti milliard griven”, *Status Quo*, 12 April 2012.

³⁵³

https://www.city.kharkov.ua/uk/search.html?p=405&qstring=%D0%B1%D1%8E%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B5%D1%82&date_from=2006-10-01&date_to=2013-09-01&searchNews=1 ;
<https://kharkivoda.gov.ua/dokumenty/113/750/752/2544>

³⁵⁴ “Biudzheth Khar’kova -2012: kuda ushli den’gi”, *Mediaport*, 26 February 2013.

³⁵⁵ It has to be said that during the first premiership of Yanukovich, the subventions from the state budget increased by an unprecedented amount – the total subvention increased two-fold, including a nearly three-fold increase in the subventions to poor families. The subventions were also more diverse and the city received the first sum for the building of the remaining metro stations (nearly 50 million). See “Svodnyi biudzheth Khar’kova za 11 mesiatsev sostavil 2 mlrg. 103 mln. 900 tys. grn.”, *Mediaport*, 5 December 2007.

Table 25: Subventions to Kharkiv, in million hryvnia, 2003 – 2009

Dates	Total subventions
January - June 2003	70,9 ³⁵⁶
January - July 2004	123,8 ³⁵⁷
January – May 2005	59,1 ³⁵⁸
January - July 2006	105,8 ³⁵⁹
January -September 2006	167,6 ³⁶⁰
January - April 2007	129, 6 ³⁶¹
January – June 2007	241, 3 ³⁶²
January – July 2007	286,1 ³⁶³
Total in 2007	673,9 ³⁶⁴
January – April 2008	169,2 ³⁶⁵
January - July 2008	326, 1 ³⁶⁶
January – April 2009	179, 6 ³⁶⁷
January - July 2009	332,5 ³⁶⁸

³⁵⁶ “Dokhody biudzheta Khar’kova v sravnenii s proshlym godom vyrosli na 20%”, *Status Quo*, June 2003.

³⁵⁷ “Dokhodnaia chast’ biudzheta Khar’kova za pervoe polugodie sostavila 482 mln. grn”, *Status Quo*, 5 July 2004.

³⁵⁸ “Biudzheta Khar’kova po itogam pervogo polugodia 2005 g., skoree vsego, nedopoluchit 20 mln. grn. – gorupravlenie biudzheta i finansov”, *Status Quo*, 22 June 2005.

³⁵⁹ “Khar’kov – edinstvennyi krupnyi gorod Ukrainy, kommunal’nye predpriiatiia kotorogo ne otchisliaut chast’ pribyli v gorbudzheta – T. Takuesheva”, *Status Quo*, 18 July 2006.

³⁶⁰ “Plan postuplenii v biudzheta Khar’kova za 8 mesiatsev perevypolnen na 3,8%”, *Status Quo*, 4 September 2006.

³⁶¹ “Biudzheta Khar’kova v I kvartale perevypolnen na 4,5%”, *Status Quo*, 20 April 2007.

³⁶² “Biudzheta Khar’kova za 5 mes. 2007 g. perevypolnen na 7,6%”, *Status Quo*, 4 June 2007.

³⁶³ “Biudzheta Khar’kova v I polugodii 2007 g. perevypolnen na 9,5%”, *Status Quo*, 3 July 2007.

³⁶⁴ “Biudzheta Khar’kova na 2007 g. perevypolnen na 1,3% - gorsovet”, *Status Quo*, 9 January 2008.

³⁶⁵ “734,6 mln. grn. Postupilo v biudzheta Khar’kova v I kvartale 2008 g.”, *Status Quo*, 2 April 2008.

³⁶⁶ “Odin milliard 439,5 mln. grn. postupilo v biudzheta Khar’kova za pervoe polugodie”, *Status Quo*, 17 July 2008.

³⁶⁷ “Bolee 650 mln. grn. postupilo v gorodskoi biudzheta Khar’kova za 1 kvartal 2009 g.”, *Status Quo*, 2 April 2009.

³⁶⁸ “1 mlrd. 359 mln. grn. postupilo v biudzheta Khar’kova za pervoe polugodie 2009 g. – gorsovet”, *Status Quo*, 2 July 2009.

January - December 2009	600,2 ³⁶⁹
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However, subventions increased when Yanukovych became President.³⁷⁰ The table below illustrates the changes.

Table 26. Subventions to Kharkiv, in million hryvnia, 2010 – 2013

Dates	Total subventions
January – April 2010	267,5 ³⁷¹
January - June 2010	429,5 ³⁷²
January – July 2010	513 ³⁷³
January - November 2010	745,1 ³⁷⁴
January – July 2013	596, 4 ³⁷⁵
January - November 2013	1 billion 837 ³⁷⁶

I could not find any information about state subventions for 2011 – 2012 across *Status Quo*, *Mediaport* and Kharkiv city portal. However, it was consistently reported that “state subventions increased by 1,2%”.³⁷⁷

³⁶⁹ “Pochti 2,5 mln. grn. postupilo v biudzheth Khar’kova za 11 mes. 2009 g.”, *Status Quo*, 2 December 2009.

³⁷⁰ <http://www.city.kharkov.ua/ru/news/za-2012-rik-dohodi-byudzhetu-harkova-sklali-ponad-4-5-milyarda-griven-17556.html>

³⁷¹ “Bolee 960 mln. grn. postupilo v svodnyi biudzheth Khar’kova s nachala goda”, *Status Quo*, 6 May 2010.

³⁷² “1,5 mlrd. grn. postupilo v biudzheth Khar’kova za pervoe polugodie 2010 g.”, *Status Quo*, 2 July 2010.

³⁷³ “Biudzheth Khar’kova za sem’ mesiatsev 2010 g. perevypolnen na 1,5%”, *Status Quo*, 3 August 2010.

³⁷⁴ “Za 10 mesiatsev etogo goda v biudzheth Khar’kova postupilo 2,6 mlrd. grn.”, *Mediaport*, 2 November 2010.

³⁷⁵ “V biudzheth Khar’kova postupilo bol’she dvukh milliardov dokhodov”, *Status Quo*, 2 July 2013.

³⁷⁶ “Biudzheth Khar’kova uvelichilsia na 11 millionov”, *Status Quo*, 20 November 2013.

³⁷⁷ “Biudzheth Khar’kova za 9 mesiatsev uvelichilsia na 15%”, *Status Quo*, 4 October 2011; “Dokhody biudzheta Khar’kova za god vozrosli bol’she chem na 15%”, *Status Quo*, 1 December 2011; <https://www.city.kharkov.ua/ru/news/za-sichen-2011-roku-v-zvedeniy-byudzheth-harkova-nadiyshlo-263-5-mln-grn-6416.html>.

Under Yanukovych, the subventions continued to rise every year by at least 1%.³⁷⁸ In August 2010, 123 million hryvnia of a “special subvention” was proposed to be disbursed to subsidise the population of Kharkiv region.³⁷⁹ In February 2011, the region received around 200 million hryvnia to compensate for the use of natural resources.³⁸⁰ Under Yanukovych, for the first time, Kharkiv began receiving special subventions for building and maintenance of roads and to complete the preparation for the Euro-2012, which was unprecedented.³⁸¹ In 2012, an unprecedented 850 million was disbursed to finance medical care in Kharkiv. According to Kharkiv city Department of Health Care, this was a very substantial amount.³⁸² In 2012 it was reported that the following year Kharkiv was to receive a greater amount of subventions than any other regions.³⁸³

From the mid-2000, unlike their Donetsk counterparts who were reliant on informal networks controlling the centre, the city authorities sought to increase the independence of the city budget by selling communal property and land to increase revenues.³⁸⁴ Over the years, land auctions and privatisation of communal enterprises contributed greatly to the city budget.³⁸⁵ The mayor Dobkin followed this through by reforming the public utilities sector, so that the city budget would increasingly rely on its own resources.³⁸⁶ In February 2008, the city authorities proposed to privatise Kharkiv metro in order to make it less dependent on the centre for subventions.³⁸⁷

³⁷⁸ “V merii podveli itogi biudzheta-2011”, *Mediaport*, 4 January 2012.

³⁷⁹ “Bolee 120 mln. grn. Budet vydeleno v etom godu na subsidirovanie zhitelei Khar’kovskoi oblasti”, *Status Quo*, 16 August 2010.

³⁸⁰ “Khar’kovskaia oblast’ poluchit bolee 200 mln. grn. Kompensatsii za pol’zovanie prirodnymi resursami”, *Status Quo*, 1 February 2011.

³⁸¹ <http://www.city.kharkov.ua/ru/news/kabmin-kompensuye-harkovu-chastinu-vitrata-za-kreditami-na-miskiy-transport-dopovнено-11684.html>

³⁸² <http://www.city.kharkov.ua/ru/news/harkiv-otrimaye-blizko-850-milyoniv-griven-z-derzhbyudzhetu-na-ohoronu-zdorov-ya-12012.html>

³⁸³ “Khar’kovskaia oblgosadministratsia poluchit iz gosbiudzheta bol’she ostal’nykh administratsii”, *Status Quo*, 7 December 2012

³⁸⁴ “Biudzheta Khar’kova-2012: kuda ushli den’gi”, *Mediaport*, 26 February 2013.

³⁸⁵ “Ob’em postuplenii v biudzheta Khar’kova ot prodazhi zemli v 2008 g. uvelichilsia v 32 raza – gorsovet”, *Status Quo*, 20 May 2008.

³⁸⁶ “M. Dobkin: ia ne schitaiu sebja velikim merom vsekh vremen i narodov, kotoryi ne oshibaetsia”, *Status Quo*, 8 November 2006.

³⁸⁷ “Trudovoi kollektiv Khar’kovskogo metropolitena podderzhal vozmozhnost’ peredachi predpriiatiia v kommunal’noi sobstvennost’ goroda”, *Status Quo*, 18 February 2008.

As in the sphere of politics, Kharkiv's inter-budgetary relations were not free from conflict. Conflicts between the two opposing camps – the Party of Regions and “Our Ukraine” – spilled into the budgetary sphere, and the region relied on the centre and the judiciary system to resolve these conflicts. In April 2008, the Cabinet of Ministers ruled that the city of Kharkiv was to receive a subvention to finance its socio-economic development through the regional budget. According to Avakov, the regional council controlled by the Party of Regions gave the city too much,³⁸⁸ therefore in late April 2008, Avakov's deputy challenged the decision of the regional council to allocate funds to the city and declared that the lawfulness of the regional council's decision had to be determined by the regional prosecutor.³⁸⁹ The prosecutor got involved supporting the regional administration against the regional council.³⁹⁰ The regional council dismissed the prosecutor's claim, while the city council allocated the funds to the socio-economic development of the city. The prosecutor filed a complaint with the Kharkiv district administrative court against the decision of the regional council to dismiss the prosecutor's challenge.³⁹¹ In June 2008, the regional administration representatives, including Avakov, visited the Ministry of Finance to determine the list of subvention recipients. Following the consultation with the Ministry of Finance, Dobkin claimed that the regional administration presented a fraudulent list of subvention recipients to the Cabinet of Ministers. According to Dobkin, Avakov did not consult the regional council but included the subvention recipients arbitrarily. Dobkin asked the deputies of the regional council to appeal to the centre to further assist with resolving this issue.³⁹² The issue was finally settled when the subvention was allocated to the city.

³⁸⁸ “Reshenie poslednei sessii Khar'kovskogo oblsoveta grubo narushilo zakon o gosbiudzhete- pervyi zampredsedatelia obladministratsii”, *Status Quo*, 18 April 2008.

³⁸⁹ “Zakonnost' resheniia sessii oblsoveta o pereraspredelenii sredstv gossubventsii dolzhna opredelit' prokuratura – V. Babaev”, *Status Quo*, 25 April 2008.

³⁹⁰ “Prokuror Khar'kovskoi oblasti oprotestoval reshenie sessii Khar'kovskogo oblsoveta v chasti, kasaiushcheisia raspredelenia gosudarstvennoi subventsii – oblgosadministratsia”, *Status Quo*, 29 April 2008.

³⁹¹ “Predstaviteli Khar'kovskoi oblgosadministratsii soglasovyvaiut v Minfine pereche' ob'ektov pod poluchenie subventsii iz gosbiudzheta – vitse-gubernator”, *Status Quo*, 10 June 2008.

³⁹²

“M. Dobkin obvinil A. Avakova v fal'sifikatsii dokumentov, podannykh v Kabinet ministrov dlia poluchenia subventsii iz gosbiudzheta”, *Status Quo*, 11 June 2008.

4.2. Concentrated patronage region

In Donetsk, the inter-budgetary relations with the centre were more volatile. Due to its peculiar economic make up,³⁹³ Donetsk region remained one of the richest regions in Ukraine and, therefore, was a donor region, even at the height of the economic malaise in the 1990s. Kravchuk shows that per capita regulating revenues generated in the eastern oblasts amounted to 41.8% of the all-Ukraine total in 1995 (and 13% for Donetsk Oblast alone). Overall, between 1992 and 1995, the east, including Donetsk, produced between 40 and 45% of total regulating revenues (Kravchuk, 1999, 156).³⁹⁴ According to Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne's calculations, between 1992 and 1999 Donetsk region consistently over-executed its budget and achieved higher spending levels than planned (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011). In fact, both Donetsk region and Donetsk city consistently over-executed their budgets for most of the period up to 2014.³⁹⁵

As a result, the region acted as a donor to some regions in the west of Ukraine.³⁹⁶ In the 1990s, the ratio of central government subventions to total revenue in Volynska oblast was 60% and 0% in Donetsk (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne 2011, 44 – 45). As Kravchuk writes of the 1990s, “several poor regions in western and central Ukraine are highly dependent upon the budgetary subsidies that originate largely in taxes paid in the east” (Kravchuk, 1999, 156). This continued throughout the entire period before 2014. In July 2008, the governor of the Donetsk region Volodymyr Logvinenko stated that the budgetary requisition (or sequestration) practices by the centre were unfair and that the equalisation grants had to be distributed in line with the regional population and not according to the formula (“the

³⁹³ As of 2006, 20% of Ukraine's manufacturing was concentrated in the Donetsk region (Kovaleva, 2007, 64).

³⁹⁴ As of 2006, the Donetsk region “[produced] nearly a quarter of gross industrial production and along with two other [regions] – Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv – [was] a net contributor to the state budget” (Kovaleva, 2007). By contrast, as Kuzio (2015, 175) writes, “The seven oblasts of western Ukraine only account for 12 percent of the country's GDP or less than the city of Kyiv (18 percent)”. Donetsk region produced over 20% of GDP in Ukraine by 2013. See “Donetsk'kie korni nyneshnei vlasti obespechivaiut finansirovanie oblasti – ekspert”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 December 2012.

³⁹⁵ “Luk'ianchenko schitaet, chto god raboty s Tymoshenko “po poniatiam” oboshelsia Donetsk'ku v 75 millionov griven”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 January 2010 ; “Dokhodnaia chast' gorodskogo biudzheta vpolnena na 111,5% - Luk'ianchenko”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 6 August 2013.

³⁹⁶ Serhiy Blavats'kyi, “Partykuliaryzm chi prykhovani symptomy ukraïns'kogo federalizmu”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 26 July 2002.

more the region earns, the more the centre takes”).³⁹⁷ “We contributed 20% of GDP,” Logvinenko stated, “the region has 10% of Ukraine’s population, but we only received 6-7% from the consolidated budget”. He noted that most subventions and grants went to agricultural regions in the west.³⁹⁸

Logvinenko was a compromise figure appointed by President Yushchenko with the agreement of the Party of Regions dominant in the region. Unlike all other governors (except Vadim Chuprun who served for less than a year as the Donetsk region governor) who belonged to the Party of Regions, Logvinenko was not openly affiliated to any political party in Donetsk. Given that “Donetsk as the donor region” was these governors and mayor’s favourite argument periodically invoked when negotiating with the centre,³⁹⁹ it is quite telling that a compromise figure such as Logvinenko used exactly the same argument. By 2013, 15 regions in Ukraine, including the western regions, received over 50% in government equalisation grants.⁴⁰⁰

The budgetary asymmetry included not only how subventions and equalisation grants were distributed between the centre and the regions but also the kinds of taxes that the regions were allowed to retain. For example, for the year 2000 the personal income tax was assigned entirely to local budgets and the enterprise profits tax became exclusively a State revenue source (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011, 16). “Because of their strategic importance and political power, Crimea and the city of Kyiv were subject to separate legislation from the rest of the regional government,” write Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne (2011, 16), “in 2000, these two subnational governments enjoyed all of the profits tax collected on their territory”. By contrast, all the other regions received only profits from communal enterprises and land tax. Such budgetary asymmetry therefore encouraged intense bargaining and lobbying for a better budget or, as the governors and mayors called it, “a fair budget”. In fact, for much of the period in question, the state budget and the levels of equalisation grants and subventions could be adjusted only after intense

³⁹⁷ In 2002 this coefficient was allowed to vary in a range of .8 to one for donor governments and the lower end of this range was associated with rapid revenue growth in the period 1999 – 2002. For transfer recipients the value of “alpha” has been maintained at unity (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011, 124).

³⁹⁸ “Donetskii gubernator schitaet utopiei formulnyi podkhod pri formirovanii biudzheta”, *Novosti Donbassa*.

³⁹⁹ “SBU ne vzbuzhdala ugolovnoe delo protiv Donetskogo gorsoвета prokuror oblasti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 March 2007.

⁴⁰⁰ “Donetskaia oblast’ soderzhit nerabotaiushchie regiony – rasskazal gubernator”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 February 2013.

lobbying by the governor and mayor.⁴⁰¹ As Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne write of the 1990s (2011, 12), there was “a pervasive climate of budget bargaining... among different levels of government to ration scarce budgetary resources”. The rate of the shared taxes and subventions (transfers) depended on the success of such bargaining (Martinez-Vazquez and Wayne, 2011,12) and the negotiating and political skills and personal networks of the regional government officials (ibid., 34).

With the economic malaise subsiding in the 2000s, these practices, however, continued. Regardless of their political affiliation, all governors and mayors had to lobby for a “fair budget”.⁴⁰² Donetsk mayor Oleksandr Luk’aychenko, one of the most experienced and tenacious negotiators for the “fair budget,” for example, lobbied the Ministry of Finance almost every year since 2006 for a certain percentage of profit tax to remain in the region.⁴⁰³ More specifically, the mayors and governors advocated a new approach to the budget, whereby the region which earned most would not have to contribute most.⁴⁰⁴ This was confirmed in my brief exchange with Elite Member 1, who published extensively on budgetary federalism (email exchange, 22 07 2019). In April 2013, at the behest of the Donetsk region, two Party of Regions representatives registered a new bill in the Rada asking for profit tax to remain in the regional budget.⁴⁰⁵

Governors usually lobbied the Ministry of Finance directly on their trips to Kyiv. However, sometimes they used other, more unorthodox methods, of bargaining. A unique case of budgetary bargaining with the use of radical groups, was the creation of “Donbas Rus” in 2008 by Natalia Vitrenko’s Progressive Socialists.⁴⁰⁶ The group became one of the most important groups during the pro-Russian protests in spring 2014. Thus, the local elites sometimes fostered radical parties and movements to force changes in the centre and make it reconsider its policies. It was argued that openly secessionist groups such as

⁴⁰¹ For example, in November 2005, after intense lobbying, the budgetary sequestration was adjusted to the previous level. See “Donets’ku udalos’ otstoiat u minfina tot variant biudzheta, v kotorom iz’iattia iz gorbiudzheta ostanut’sia na urovne 2005 goda”, *Novosti Donbassa*. There was a similar situation in the early 2010.

⁴⁰² “Gubernator Donetskoi oblasti pretenduet na 10 % gosudarstvennogo biudzheta”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 April 2010.

⁴⁰³ “Mer Donets’ka hochet, chtoby gorodu ostavliali khotia by 40% ot zarabotannogo”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 21 September 2010.

⁴⁰⁴ “Gubernator Donetskoi oblasti khochet po spravedlivosti podelit’ biudzheta”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 29 November 2010.

⁴⁰⁵ “Popravki v nalogovy i biudzhety kodeksy mogut prinesti Donets’ku sotni millionov griven”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 April 2013.

⁴⁰⁶ “Partiia Regionov raskolalas’ v Donetske”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 February 2008.

“Donetsk Republic” movement, legalised by the local government in 2006 was used as a bargaining tool with the centre. In 2007, the group was banned, but in the years that followed, they conducted at least 10 public protests with anti-government slogans, reportedly sanctioned by the local elites.⁴⁰⁷

The governors and mayors were more successful in their lobbying efforts when the centre was controlled by their own network (or the “Donets’k clan”) and not the rival network of Yulia Tymoshenko.

Budgetary requisitioning was less intense under Yanukovych than under Tymoshenko. Luk’yanchenko commented on the city budget in 2012: “So far, budget requisitioning is at the level of 2011. This is less than under the “Orange government”. Under that government, we paid 337 million hryvnia⁴⁰⁸ but in 2012 we paid 208 million hryvnia.”⁴⁰⁹ Despite the requisition into the state budget being the highest in Donets’k, according to the mayor,⁴¹⁰ in 2013, the level of budgetary requisitions into the state budget decreased dramatically compared to 2012.⁴¹¹ Not only that, the governors secured the desired 9% of subventions by 2013.⁴¹² According to journalists, this was due to the Donets’k origins of the current government and successful lobbying efforts.⁴¹³ In the same year, the government decided to disburse over half a billion of state funds to Donets’k and Luhans’k.

The tables below illustrate how equalisation grants – that is what the State transferred to the city budget – increased under Yanukovych and how budgetary sequesterisation or contribution to the state increased under Tymoshenko for Donets’k city. In effect, Tymoshenko’s government introduced greater volatility into the inter-budgetary relations between Donets’k city and the centre. This was consistently emphasised in the press.

⁴⁰⁷ “V Donbasse reanimirovali separatistov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 15 November 2008; The post appears quarter of the page down on Donetsk Republic Vkontakte archived page on 28 August 2012 <https://archive.is/jQJD2>.

⁴⁰⁸ Corroborated here “Mer Donetska nadeetsia chto Tymoshenko ne budet zaritsia na bol’shie dokhody goroda”, *Novosti Donbassa*.

⁴⁰⁹ “Iz’iatie iz biudzheta Donets’ka sokratilos’ po sravneniiu s “Oranzhevoi” piatiletkoi – mer”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 November 2011.

⁴¹⁰ “Luk’yanchenko rasskazal, chto lozungi Partii Regionov vpolniaiutsia vezde, krome Donetska”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 December 2012.

⁴¹¹ “V 2013 godu bol’she vsego deneg zaberut u Donetska – govorit mer”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 December 2012.

⁴¹² “Donetskii gubernator rasskazal na chto on portratit biudzhetye den’gi”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 October 2012.

⁴¹³ “Donetskie korni nyneshnei vlasti obespechivaiut finansirovanie oblasti – ekspert”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 December 2012.

Table 27: Equalisation grants and negative transfers to the state in Donetsk city and Donetsk region compared with Kharkiv city and Kharkiv region in thousand hryvnia

Year	Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
2007 (Tymoshenko government) ⁴¹⁴	Donetsk city	0	0	149845,3	31,14
	Kharkiv city	0	0	79928,4	9,31
	Donetsk region	3347,1	0,03	0	0
	Kharkiv region	204775,8	3,37	0	0
2008 (Tymoshenko government) ⁴¹⁵	Donetsk city	0	0	337 739,6	54,43
	Kharkiv city	0	0	98 087,3	8,25
	Donetsk region	134 794,7	0,86	0	0
	Kharkiv region	392 815,5	3,98	0	0
2009 (Tymoshenko government) ⁴¹⁶	Donetsk city	0	0	301 153,1	23,56
	Kharkiv city	0	0	13 571,4	1,08
	Donetsk region	306 195,9	1,75	0	0
	Kharkiv region	488 601,4	4,32	0	0
2011 (Azarov / Yanukovich government) ⁴¹⁷	Donetsk city	0	0	207 718,1	13,47
	Kharkiv city			2 626,6	0,15
	Donetsk region	658 385,3	3,19	0	0
	Kharkiv region	397 778,1	2,18	0	0
2012 (Azarov / Yanukovich government) ⁴¹⁸	Donetsk city	0	0	281,648.2	20,37
	Kharkiv city	43,670.2	0.22	0	0
	Donetsk region	803,430.1	3.05	0	0
	Kharkiv region	495,769.5	2.46	0	0

⁴¹⁴“Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2007 rik”, *Zakon. Rada*; <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/489-16>

⁴¹⁵ “Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2008 rik ta pro vnesennia zmin do deiakikh zakonodavchykh aktiv Ukrainy” <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/107-17>

⁴¹⁶ “Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2009 rik”, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/835-17>

⁴¹⁷ “Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2011 rik”, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2857-17>

⁴¹⁸ “Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2012 rik”, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4282-17>

2013 (Azarov/Yanukovych government) ⁴¹⁹	Donets'k city	0	0	280,563.2	17.15
	Kharkiv city	0	0	71,660.5	3.16
	Donets'k region	810,820.2	2.99	0	0
	Kharkiv region	925,456.2	4.44	0	0

The tables below illustrate that the levels of subventions were greater for Donets'k region under Yanukovych than for other regions. See also Appendix II.

Table 28: Select subventions to Donets'k city and region compared, in thousand hryvnia

Year	Administrative unit	Subsidies to poor families	Subsidy 1	Subsidy 2
2009 (Tymoshenko government) ⁴²⁰	Donets'k region	1 038 820,7	543 023,6	34 085,9
	Kharkiv region	632 694,6	437 189,5	21 478,7
	Donets'k city	0	0	0
	Kharkiv city	0	0	0
2012 (Azarov / Yanukovych government) ⁴²¹	Donets'k region	2,436,787.2	877,291.8	105,555.5
	Kharkiv region	1,553,747.5	587,623.5	24,248.1
	Donets'k city	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Kharkiv city	0.0	0.0	0.0
2013 (Azarov/Yanukovych government) ⁴²²	Donets'k region	3,121,888.9	828,716.0	131,647.9
	Kharkiv region	1,936,889.6	591,913.0	22,681.8
	Donets'k city	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Kharkiv city	19,707.1	0.0	0.0

⁴¹⁹ "Pro derzhavnyy biudzheth Ukrainy na 2013 rik", <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5515-17>

⁴²⁰ "Pro derzhavnyy biudzheth Ukrainy na 2009 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/835-17>

⁴²¹ "Pro derzhavnyy biudzheth Ukrainy na 2012 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4282-17>

⁴²² "Pro derzhavnyy biudzheth Ukrainy na 2013 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5515-17>

A panoply of articles appeared in 2012 – 2014 illustrating that Donetsk in fact became a budgetary recipient under Yanukovich.⁴²³ The data above and in the articles provides support to the argument that Donetsk benefitted from the subventions when the favoured informal network was controlling the centre.

The potential success of the federalisation bid in 2014 would have reduced the amount of resources and effort put into budgetary lobbying. It could have also potentially led to a consistently fairer budget for Donetsk, reducing the impact of the volatile politics in the centre. Regardless of whether indeed Donetsk was a donor region or not, the fact remained that the budgetary policies of the centre were highly asymmetric, favouring two select regions of Kyiv and Crimea much more consistently than Donetsk. In addition, the promotion of the rival network forces in the centre in 2014, such as Tymoshenko's "right-hand man" Oleksandr Turchynov, and a potential political come back of Tymoshenko might have instilled fear and confusion into the Donetsk political elites as they were not as adroit at negotiating with Tymoshenko for a fair budget than they were when Yanukovich was in power.

An example of the "crisis budgets" of 2008 – 2010 when Tymoshenko was Prime Minister would illustrate the point. The region was hit very hard by the crisis of 2008; production was cut in the key industries, such as mining and metallurgy, undermining the incomes. The budgets therefore severely underperformed, albeit according to Donetsk mayor, the city continued to contribute into the state budget in a timely manner.⁴²⁴ Yet, the requisitioning from both the city and regional budgets continued to be draconian, regardless of the mayor's and governor's lobbying efforts, so that by February 2010, the governor Logvinenko claimed that the State Treasury took over 1 billion hryvnia from the regional budget, without the prospect of returning this money.⁴²⁵ This was confirmed to me in an interview with Journalist 1 (19 07 2019).

⁴²³ "Dotatsiinyi Donbas. Chi spravdi rehion godue Ukrayynu?", *Tyzhden.ua*, 12 March 2013; "Iaki rehiony goduiut' Ukrayynu: U Rivnens'kij oblasti dokhody i vytraty biudzhetu praktichno rivni", *Ogo*, 28 February 2014; "Khto kogo "godue" sered ukrayynskikh regioniv", *Ekonomika*, 29 August 2012; "Khto godue Ukrayynu: mifi i real'nist", *Ukrayinska Prava Forum*.

⁴²⁴ "Aleksandr Luk'yanchenko: biznesa u menia net", *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 December 2009.

⁴²⁵ "Donets'kii gubernator nadeetsia, chto region ostaviat milliard griven", *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 February 2010.

The 2009 year was particularly turbulent.⁴²⁶ Due to the worldwide economic crisis and also hosting the Euro-2009 and Euro-2012 sporting events, the city of Donetsk especially was in need of increased subventions. The mayor Luk'yanchenko continually complained about the centre reneging on its promises to finance the major infrastructural projects, such as Donetsk metro which was in the making for 8 years,⁴²⁷ and social programmes in the city of Donetsk.⁴²⁸ According to Luk'yanchenko, the city received less than 40% of what was planned.⁴²⁹ The mayor stated in one of the interviews that most of the state subventions went into the building of water pipes in Lviv and infrastructural projects in other regions.⁴³⁰ The region faced exactly the same budgetary problems as the city according to the governor Anatoliy Bliznuk, with no money transferred from the government. State programmes were financed only 23% according to Bliznuk.⁴³¹

Luk'yanchenko blamed Tymoshenko for the lack of sound budgetary policies towards Donetsk. Commenting on it in an interview, he stated that she was “micro-managing the budget”. Under Yanukovich, by contrast, the city administration could supply better communal services and build more houses. The city was therefore forced to borrow municipal loans and rely on private companies to build more social housing.⁴³² Many of those private building companies the mayor and governor had to rely on during the crisis years of 2008 – 2010 were owned by Akhmetov and Yanukovich's son Oleksandr.

With the ascent of Yanukovich in 2010, however, despite his origins in Donetsk, some other budgetary problems continued to occur thus contributing to the further need for bargaining with the centre and creating the grounds for pushing forward the federalist argument in 2014. More specifically, beginning in 2004, the wages of state employees were began to be paid through the State Treasury.⁴³³ According to the mayor Luk'yanchenko, this practice was initiated because in 2004, at the height of the “separatist crisis”

⁴²⁶ Yevhen Shybalov, “Biudzhetni roman: donets'kyi rozdil”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 15 February 2008.

⁴²⁷ “Aleksandr Luk'yanchenko: biznesa u menia net”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 December 2009.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.: “Luk'yanchenko ne pugaet prezident Tymoshenko, u nego est' opyt smeny politicheskikh orientirov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 December 2009.

⁴²⁹ “Luk'yanchenko ne khvataet partnerskikh otnoshenii s tsentrom”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 June 2009.

⁴³⁰ “Luk'yanchenko vypolnil ob'yazatel'stva pered gosbiudzhetom”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 2 December 2009.

⁴³¹ “Blizniuk govorit, chto kaznacheistvo “zamorozilo” 900 millionov griven mestnykh sovetov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 January 2010.

⁴³² “Aleksandr Luk'yanchenko: posle prezidentskikh vyborov ya reshu idti li mne na tretii rok”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 December 2009.

⁴³³ “Luk'yanchenko ne smozhet prekratit' platezhi v tsentral'nyi biudzhets”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 March 2009.

(that time it was initiated by the elites – on which below), the regions withheld budgetary payments to the centre. This necessitated the transfer of budgetary oversight to the State Treasury as a single “transmission belt” so that the centre could retaliate against the regions.⁴³⁴ Paradoxically, during the presidency of Yanukovych, perhaps due to the pervasive corruption, the State Treasury began accumulating debt to the regions and the city. As Journalist 1 stated in the interview with me, Yanukovych’s government “showed people gigantic numbers but this money failed to arrive to the region” (16 07 2019). From 2011, the State Treasury began holding up money on its accounts leading to a situation when the entire region and the city were in months-long arrears to their state employees.⁴³⁵ In 2012, the State Treasury owed 60 million to Donetsk city budget and 1.3 billion to the region.⁴³⁶ In 2013, Mykola Levchenko began lobbying for a law that would allow governors and mayors to prosecute the Treasury for not paying the wages on time and holding up money on its accounts.⁴³⁷

All of this meant that the regions could not withhold budgetary transfers to the State Treasury in 2014, as they did in 2004, for the fear of the centre’s retaliation.⁴³⁸ This meant that one of the channels of putting pressure on the centre – such as through withholding the budgetary transfers – was blocked. The only channel that remained for the governors and mayors was to engage in more subtle political bargaining with the centre. A referendum on federalisation might have potentially eliminate the State Treasury’s control over the budgets.

Finally, the paralysis of the city and regional administration and their incoherent decisions in 2014 might be explained by the fact that they were afraid of the spontaneous popular upheaval in spring 2014. This was confirmed to me in an interview with Journalist 1 (19 07 2019). Why is the budgetary politics relevant to this? For many years prior to the crisis, subventions and regional resources were directed primarily towards financing social programmes to support particularly vulnerable sections of the population (especially under the governor Shyshatskiy, whose short governorship was aimed exclusively at this), pay

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ “V Donetskoi oblasti kaznacheistvo ne oplatilo scheta na 750 mln. griven”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 December 2011.

⁴³⁶ “Kaznacheistvo zadolzhalo Donetsk’ku 60 mln. griven. Mer schitaet, chto sudit’sia bessmyslenno”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 December 2012.

⁴³⁷ “V Rade predlagaiut shtrafofat’ kaznacheistvo iz-za dolgov pered Donetsk’kom”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 March 2013.

⁴³⁸ “Luk’yanchenko ne smozhet prekratit’ platezhi v tsentral’nyi biudzheth”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 March 2009.

wages to state employees,⁴³⁹ and finance some form of “hand-to-mouth” existence, such as paying mounting wage arrears at state mines. In 2008 – 2009, for example, half of the regional budgets and subventions went to finance wage arrears in state mines. Wage arrears in state mines and state plants however continued to accumulate throughout the entire period in question. For example, in 2006 75% of all wage arrears accumulated in the state mining industry.⁴⁴⁰ Governors, such as Logvinenko, continued to complain that none of the funds went to modernise state mines and improve working conditions. It is, therefore, quite logical to conclude that the region overall had a strong latent protest potential. The inconsistent decisions and clandestine bargaining by the local political elites that followed in 2014 is, to a certain extent, evidence to their fear of uncontrolled public upheaval. At the same time, the local political elites could perceive the upheaval as an opportunity to put pressure on the centre.

In summary, in Kharkiv inter-budgetary relations with the centre were more stable, regardless of the network controlling the centre, with the level of subventions increasing incrementally under the premiership of Yanukovich and Tymoshenko. It must also be said that the level of subventions to Kharkiv improved under Yanukovich. In Donetsk, by contrast, the inter-budgetary relations were more volatile: Donetsk depended on the largely informal negotiations with the centre and on its kin informal governing network controlling the centre. This was particularly evident when Yulia Tymoshenko’s network was controlling the centre. The governors and mayors were pressed hard to lobby for the fair budget therefore.

5. Actual acquaintance, elite survival, and elite learning

5.1. Diffused patronage

Owing to the national and region-specific structural constraints described above, in diffused patronage regions, local elites from competing networks are involved in dense interactions with each other and with their patrons in the centre. Through the iterative processes of conflict, the elites learn how to make their actual acquaintance with the members of competing networks and those from their preferred network work to their advantage. More specifically, they learn how to negotiate with the members of rival

⁴³⁹ Called “the budget of survival”. See Yevhen Shybalov, “Antykryzovi tantsi”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 6 February 2009.

⁴⁴⁰ “Obshchestvennaia kollegiia pri Donetskoi OGA raskritikovala proekt biudzheta Ukrainy na 2006 god”, *Novosti Donbassa*.

networks and how to use the resources of their preferred networks distributed across the political system, especially in the judiciary. Actual acquaintance and dense interactions with the members of rival networks and their own network act as “safeguards” protecting these elites’ hold on power. Thus, ongoing conflicts among the members of competing networks become a type of investment, which helps the elites acquire knowledge of what rival networks prefer and build resilience to ensure their own survival under any network. In Kitschelt and Wilkinson’s terms, ongoing conflicts create certain cognitive expectations about the behaviour of the members of their rival networks, which are useful for the elites in the long-term in that, if a challenge comes from the rival network again, the elites know what to expect. This explains why certain elites in diffused patronage regions became well versed in law, compared to their counterparts in the concentrated patronage regions, and why they opted for united and integral Ukraine in spring 2014. In addition, some local elites can be targeted by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Ministry of the Interior. These elites would manipulate the local courts and the loopholes in the judiciary system to settle their scores with the SBU and the Ministry. The centre in Kyiv is heavily involved in resolving all of these conflicts, which makes information flows between the centre and the region more transparent.

In the classic diffused patronage city of Kharkiv, ideological and commercial conflicts permeated local politics throughout the period of the divided-executive, only subsiding under one chief executive of Yanukovych. In many cases, the line between a commercial and a political conflict was extremely blurry because the key actors, such as the governor Arsen Avakov, city council secretary and later Kharkiv city mayor Hennadiy Kernes, and Kharkiv city mayor and later governor Mykhailo Dobkin, had strong commercial interests in the region, being simultaneously owners of banks, firms, and land at various points in their careers. Some individual members of the local elites were continuously embroiled in conflict. For people like Hennadiy Kernes (the Party of Regions’ member since 2006), who became the key political actor during the events of 2013 - 2014, not a month passed without a challenge in the years prior to Yanukovych becoming President. He was continuously exposed to the allegations of either spreading libel, being connected to the city’s criminal networks, or destroying buildings unlawfully.⁴⁴¹ In

⁴⁴¹ Kernes was involved in at least 3 in 2006 alone: the building of kiosks (June – September 2006); See “Obshchestvennye slushania o tselesoobraznosti mal'kikh arkhitekturnykh form v Khar'kove byli zakryty, tak i ne otkryvshis'”, *Status Quo*, 29 September 2006; over increasing public utility tariffs; See “O meste i roli tsirka v politike i obshchestvennoi zhizni”, *Status Quo*, 1 October 2006; the referendum on Kernes’ re-election and the Klochkovska street confrontation.

2006 – 2007, Kernes faced assassination attempts on his home turf.⁴⁴² The fact that Kernes was able to survive all of this illustrates that he was building resilience to survive under any network.

Two broad types of conflict took place in Kharkiv prior to 2013: the conflicts among the members of the competing networks of Our Ukraine, Bat'kivshchina, and the Party of Regions on political-commercial grounds, and the conflict between Hennadiy Kernes and Mykhailo Dobkin and the SBU and the Ministry of the Interior. The first type of conflict illustrates how the politics in diffused patronage regions worked. The second type of conflict demonstrates how transparent the information flows were between the region and the centre. Both types illustrate how skilful the elites were at harnessing the potential of clientelistic acquaintance with the variety of networks to accomplish one of their key objectives - to remain in power.

Conflicts among the members of the competing networks ensued with the appointment of Arsen Avakov, from President Yushchenko's party Our Ukraine, as governor in Kharkiv region heavily dominated by the Party of Regions. These conflicts permeated all aspects of regional politics and governance, from land issues to utility payments to ideology. At the basis of these conflicts lied the rivalry between Avakov, on the one hand, and Dobkin and Kernes, on the other, involving the management of the city's land plots and the city and regional enterprises.⁴⁴³ Dobkin and Kernes alleged that, upon becoming governor, Avakov began alienating land from Kharkiv community (*bromada*) using his real and fictitious firms, thus depriving the city and regional authorities of essential financial flows. This was important because land tax constituted one of the major sources of taxes for the regional and city budgets. Avakov, in his turn, argued that Kernes' and Dobkin's real and fictitious firms were monopolising the land market. A statement on the city council's website read: "In 1990, A.B. Avakov established a company "Investor" and in 1992 he founded the bank "Bazis". In line with the resolutions of Kharkiv city council (5th convention), many land plots and communal property belonging to Avakov's companies were confiscated by the city's *bromada* (community), i.e. they became public property of the city. After Mykhailo Dobkin became the mayor of Kharkiv, the governor Avakov has been publicly

⁴⁴² "G. Kernes ne postradav v rezul'tate vzryva v Khar'kovskoi gostinitse "Natsional", *Status Quo*, 13 January 2007.

⁴⁴³ Some fascinating detail on this can be found in (Markus, 2015).

discrediting the work of the city council and the mayor. He uses all media resources available to him to do so.”⁴⁴⁴

To manage their conflicts, these elites used the resources of their actual acquaintance with the various patrons in the centre and in the judiciary system. The conflicts therefore contributed to the processes of elite learning whereby these elites acquired skills in manipulating the law and using their clientelistic capital in order to survive. Following the land plot management incident on the Klochkovska street in December 2006, when the construction site of the Target supermarket and workers and ordinary people, who came to support the building of the supermarket, were attacked by “hired thugs,” allegedly at the sanction of Kernes and Dobkin themselves present at the site, governor Avakov’s faction “Our Ukraine”, the smallest in the city council, initiated the dismissal of Kernes from the position of the city council’s secretary. Dobkin and Kernes, in their turn, used their actual acquaintance with and patronal links to Yanukovych and his Cabinet of Ministers to try and rein Avakov in.⁴⁴⁵ In January 2007, Dobkin appealed to the Cabinet of Ministers and the President’s Administration to “analyse Avakov’s activities more seriously”.⁴⁴⁶ The following month, he vowed to write to the General Prosecutor and the Cabinet of Ministers complaining about Avakov’s statements on utility payments that encouraged Kharkivites not to pay their utility bills.⁴⁴⁷ After the informal governing network changed in the centre and Tymoshenko became Prime Minister, Avakov, in his turn, followed his challenge through more boldly, and in late December 2007, he sent a communique to the chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Arseniy Yatseniuk proposing local re-elections.⁴⁴⁸ He even proposed changes in the local self-government law and the Constitution in order to conduct these pre-term elections.⁴⁴⁹ To him, the Klochkovska street incident

⁴⁴⁴ “Turdepartament gorispolkoma schiaet deistviia Avakova prezhdvremennymi”, *Mediaport*, 10 December 2007; “Kernes vs Avakov. Pervyi khod sdelan, otvet sleduet...”, *057*, 14 March 2014.

⁴⁴⁵ In fact every single move of the city council was scrutinised by Avakov. Throughout 2006 to 2009, the issues of utility payments, the Klochkovska street incident, the advent of the new statute of the city council all were scrutinised by Avakov and sometimes he organised picketing of the city council to oppose its decisions. See “Khar’kovskaia oblganizatsiia partii “Narodnyi Soiuz “Nasha Ukraina” 22 sentiabria primet uchastie v pikete protiv povysheniia tarifov – A. Avakov”, *Status Quo*, 20 September 2006.

⁴⁴⁶ “Mikhail Dobkin poprosit Kabmin I SP proanalizirovat’ deiatel’nost’ Avakova”, *Mediaport*, 23 January 2007.

⁴⁴⁷ “Mer Khar’kova budet zhalovat’sia v Kabmin i Genprokuraturu na gubernatora”, *Status Quo*, 13 February 2007.

⁴⁴⁸ “A. Avakov podpisal i napravil na imia predsedatelia Verkhovnoi Rady predstavlenie o naznachenii dosrochnykh vyborov gorsoвета i mera Khar’kova”, *Status Quo*, 25 December 2007.

⁴⁴⁹ This was a daring act as, by law, it required a court decision on the unlawful actions of the city mayor and an investigation by a special Rada committee. By that time, such a decision was still absent. See “Khar’kov-2008: perevybody mera i griadushchie konflikty”, *Status Quo*, 9 January 2008. Yushchenko’s motion to change the local self-government law was defeated as this motion was dependent on the decision of the administrative court of

demonstrated that the city mayor Dobkin and the city council's deputies were involved in banditry and therefore had to be dismissed.

The dispute did not settle there but carried on until 2010 and involved other small factions in the regional and city councils, such as Yulia Tymoshenko's BYUT, who followed Avakov in condemning the city council's secretary and the mayor. In January 2007, BYUT began collecting signatures for a referendum on the re-election of the city council, and Kernes and Dobkin.⁴⁵⁰ In September 2008, with Tymoshenko's network now dominant in the centre, BYUT organised daily and nightly pickets in front of the buildings of law enforcers and state organisations in the city, protesting the actions of the city council; protesters were planning to go to Kyiv to appeal to the President, Prime Minister and the Rada.⁴⁵¹ Most importantly, "Our Ukraine", BYUT and, notably, some Party of Regions deputies began pressing the Verkhovna Rada to create a special commission to investigate the incident on Klochkovska Street and the activities of Kernes and Dobkin more generally.⁴⁵² The Rada resisted this at first⁴⁵³ but eventually yielded to the pressure, and a special commission to investigate the actions of the city council was created in March 2007.

The working of the Rada special commissions on Kernes and Dobkin's case demonstrate how these elites could use the resources of their actual acquaintance with their preferred networks distributed across the political system and especially the judiciary in order to ensure their own survival. In the years 2007 – 2008, two special commissions were created in the Verkhovna Rada to investigate first the Klochkovska street incident and then, in March 2008, to investigate the alleged breaches of the Constitution of Ukraine, the laws of Ukraine on public utility tariffs, communal property, land and regional and city budgets by Kernes and Dobkin.⁴⁵⁴ Both commissions were created at the behest of their political rivals from BYUT and

Ukraine. In the end, local re-elections were impossible because of the provisions in the Constitution but also because of the lack of a suitable candidate among the opposition parties.

⁴⁵⁰ "V sluchae initsiirovaniia otstavki G. Kernes s posta sekretaria Khar'kovskogo gorsoвета BYUT, vozmozhno, budet rekomendovat' svoei fraktsii v gorsoвете podderzhat' takoe reshenie – V. Kamchatnyi", *Status Quo*, 15 January 2007

⁴⁵¹ "Khar'kovskie aktivisty BYUT platniruiut piketirovat' Verkhovnuiu Radu, poka parlamentarii ne obratiat vnimaniia na ikh trebovaniia", *Status Quo*, 17 September 2008.

⁴⁵² "Proekt postanovleniia po sobytiam na ul. Klochkovskoi v Khar'kove budet podan v profil'nyi komitet Verkhovnoi Rady na sleduiushchei nedele – D. Sviatash", *Status Quo*, 27 March 2007.

⁴⁵³ "Vopros o sozdanii sledstvennoi komissii po sobytiam na ul. Klochkovskoi v Khar'kove budet povtorno rassmotren Verkhovnoi Radoi 13 marta – V. Leshchenko", *Status Quo*, 24 February 2007.

⁴⁵⁴ "Verkhovnaia Rada priniala reshenie o sozdanii sledstvennoi komissii po rassledovaniu deiatel'nosti gorodskikh vlastei Khar'kova (dopolnenie), *Status Quo*, 7 March 2008.

“Our Ukraine”, with the governor Avakov being particularly active. Eventually, the first commission found the work of the city council satisfactory and the charges were dropped.⁴⁵⁵ It is quite possible that this was because the Rada’s “committee chairs ... [were], by law, allocated proportionately according to the seats controlled by the various parties” (D’Anieri, 2006, 141) and therefore these were heavily dominated by the Party of Regions. As for the second commission, the Rada refused to continue its work because the meeting gathered for the purpose of deciding on Kernes’ and Dobkin’s cases was inquorate. Oleh Lyashko, the head of the commission, argued that the Rada and certain judges were protecting both Kernes and Dobkin and helping them avoid punishment. “We have evidence that there are certain people in the Presidential Secretariat, Highest Council of Justice, Constitutional Court, Ministry of Justice, and many deputies, who were involved in acquitting Dobkin and Kernes”, said Lyashko.⁴⁵⁶ In the end, either the local court or the Rada resisted instigating further proceedings into the Kernes’ and Dobkin’s affairs, and the Supreme Court of Ukraine was never involved in prosecuting both. As a result, no re-elections took place.⁴⁵⁷ These loopholes in the system ensured the enduring political survival of Kernes and Dobkin in the uncertain and highly precarious political climate of Kharkiv. According to my interview with Activist in Kharkiv, the mayor and the city council secretary survived also because it was not easy for the Rada to dismiss directly elected members of the regional elite (16 07 2019).

The conflict between the governor Avakov and the Party of Regions that dominated the regional council illustrated how the various courts were used by the elites to ensure that they stayed in power.⁴⁵⁸ Avakov

⁴⁵⁵ “Khar’kovskii gorsovet nameren priniat’ obrashcheniia k tsentral’nym organam vlasti otnositel’no dosrochnykh vyborov v mestnye sovery, smeny rukovodstva metropolitena I privatizatsii “Turboatoma”, *Status Quo*, 26 February 2008. In March 2009 Rada dismissed all consideration of charges against Dobkin and Kernes; not even Yushchenko could influence the situation although he desired the re-elections; the Parliament repeatedly turned down to consider this question.

⁴⁵⁶ “Deputat Liashko: my nazovem vsekh, kto “krysheval” Dobkina i Kernes”, *Unian*, 4 September 2008; There is some evidence that the local courts were under control of the city council. It comes from the director of OOO Pressa Kharkov Vasil Tretetskiy who was involved in a long land dispute with the city authorities over the building of press kiosks. “V. Tretetskii nameren obratit’sia v General’nuiu prokuraturu s pros’boi otsenit’ deiatel’nost’ oblastnoi prokuratury v dele OOO “Pressa-Khar’kov””, *Status Quo*, 21 August 2008.

⁴⁵⁷ “Strannaia komissii”, *Status Quo*, 11 March 2008.

⁴⁵⁸ The local political elites used the centre and the entire judiciary system of Ukraine skilfully. This explains why they were so knowledgeable about the law. The state and local court systems were used by the local elites in several ways: if the appeal was not successful in one court, they sought help from another court. For example, following the mayoral elections in October 2010 and the victory of his political adversary from the Party of Regions Hennadiy Kernes, Avakov challenged the outcomes of the elections in Kharkiv district administrative court on the grounds of electoral fraud. His appeal was turned down. He followed it with an appeal at Kharkiv appeals court where it was

was thrown into the vortex of the political struggle between the competing networks early in his career as Kharkiv governor. On 3 June 2006 – before Yanukovich became Prime Minister but after the Party of Regions won the plurality in the Rada during the March 2006 parliamentary elections – the Party of Regions-dominated regional council passed a motion of non-confidence in the governor Avakov, finding his work in the region unsatisfactory and harmful for the region's economic and social development. The deputies also cited the low popularity of Yushchenko-Avakov's party "Our Ukraine" in city, district, and village councils (no more than 5% of votes). The number of deputies supporting the vote of non-confidence was 105, which, according to the Constitution, warranted the dismissal of the governor. The row between the regional council and Avakov threatened to draw the region to a standstill when the chairman Vasil' Salygin refused to debate the administration's proposals at the regional council sessions. At first, Avakov retaliated by filing a complaint against the non-confidence voting procedure within the Kyiv district court in Kharkiv, which dismissed the complaint citing the breaches of the procedure as immaterial. In its turn, the regional council filed an appeal against Avakov with the Appeals Court. Avakov travelled to Kyiv with Dobkin and Salygin in November 2006 to try to resolve the dispute at the Presidential Secretariat and with the help of his friend in the Secretariat, Viktor Baloga.⁴⁵⁹ Yushchenko agreed to act as an intermediary; multiple talks were conducted between the regional elites and the central government, and upon his visit in Kharkiv in November 2006, Yushchenko said that Avakov was to remain.⁴⁶⁰ The litigation around the vote of non-confidence dragged on at different courts until early 2007, when in January the Highest Administrative Court ruled in disfavour of Avakov.⁴⁶¹ Following this decision, Avakov's lawyers challenged the decision in the Supreme Court of Ukraine.⁴⁶² In April 2007, Avakov won his case in the Supreme Court of Ukraine: the Court ruled in Avakov's favour and judged

turned down too. See "Apellatsionnyi sud vo vtoroi raz otkazal A. Avakovu v pereschete golosov na vyborakh mera Khar'kova", *Status Quo*, 15 November 2010. Avakov therefore appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court of Ukraine. See "Vysshii administrativnyi sud Ukrainy otkazal A. Avakovu v tom, chtoby priznat' bezdeiatel'nost' TSIK protivopravnoi. "Bat'kivshchina" zaiavila o prekrashchenii sudebnykh tiazhb", *Status Quo*, 16 November 2010.

⁴⁵⁹ "A. Avakov, M. Dobkin i V. Salygin obsudili problemy sotrudnichestva vetvei vlasti i razvitiia Khar'kovskoi oblasti s glavoi Sekretariata prezidenta Ukrainy V. Balogoi", *Status Quo*, 3 November 2006.

⁴⁶⁰ Olena L'vova, "Iak Yushchenko vyrishyv kharkivs'ke "zemel'ne pytannia", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 3 November 2006.

⁴⁶¹ "Oblsovet vyrazil nedoverie Avakovu zakonno – reshenie Vysshego Administrativnogo suda (obnovleno)", *Mediaport*, 24 January 2007.

⁴⁶² "Vysshii Administrativnyi sud – ne posledniaia instantsiia" – predstavitel' Arsena Avakova v sude", *Mediaport*, 24 January 2007.

the motion of no-confidence unlawful, in breach of the due procedures.⁴⁶³ This conflict demonstrated the almost immediate involvement of the centre in the local conflict and the skilful use of the judiciary system by the local elites.

Finally, both Kernes and Dobkin were involved in conflict with the security and law enforcement agents. In fact, both had extremely conflictual relations with the entire security and law enforcement apparatus, namely the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Ministry of the Interior, including their central⁴⁶⁴ and local branches. The incident on the Klochkovska street prompted the SBU to open criminal proceedings against the city council in January 2007. For Kernes, this meant that the head of the Kharkiv region SBU branch Andriy Mukhataev was “serving the interest of certain financial groups [i.e. Target supermarket]”. Kernes followed this allegation up with an appeal to the President of Ukraine, General Prosecutor and the SBU’s central branch; he also detained an SBU officer in Kharkiv, which Mukhataev interpreted as Kernes’ attempt to keep tight control over the city.⁴⁶⁵ In September 2007, Mukhataev demanded the state to divest Kernes of his position and to deny both the city council secretary and the mayor access to the state’s classified documents.

In March 2008, the local branch of the SBU began criminal proceedings against the city council on the account of corruption and misuse of the city budget.⁴⁶⁶ A concerted physical attack was launched against the deputies of the city council on 18 March, and many personal documents were extracted from Dobkin’s and Kernes’ cabinets, leading to the SBU being accused of a “raider attack” on the government seat”.⁴⁶⁷ According to Kernes, Mukhataev was planning provocations against Dobkin and himself, involving their property and families.⁴⁶⁸ Kernes appealed to the Kyiv district court in Kharkiv to stop the

⁴⁶³ “Khar’kovskii gubernator Arsen Avakov pobedil oblastnoi sovet v Verkhovnom sude Ukrainy (obnovleno)”, *Mediaport*, 4 April 2007.

⁴⁶⁴ Dobkin was seeking to involve the central SBU apparatus to analyse the actions of the local SBU when he was refused access to the state classified documents in September 2007. “Tol’ko proverka SBU v Khar’kovskoi oblasti sotrudnikami tsentral’nogo apparata i genprokuraturoi postavit tochku v protivopravnykh deistviiakh rukovoditelei oblastnogo upravleniia SBU – M. Dobkin”, *Status Quo*, 4 October 2007.

⁴⁶⁵ “Nachal’nik oblupravleniia SBU A. Mukhataev deitsvuet v interesakh opredelennoi torgovoi gruppy – press-sluzhba Khar’kovskogo gorsoвета”, *Status Quo*, 25 January 2007.

⁴⁶⁶ “Miting v podderzhku gorodskikh vlastei Khar’kova i protiv deistvii SBU prokhorodit okolo zdaniia upravleniia SBU v Khar’kovskoi obl.”, *Status Quo*, 20 March 2008.

⁴⁶⁷ “V. Yushchenko boitsia perevyborov v Khar’kove – A. Fel’dman”, *Status Quo*, 20 March 2008.

⁴⁶⁸ “Predstaviteli SBU zanimaiutsia vyemkoi dokumentov v priemnykh M. Dobkina I G. Kernes. SBU vzbudila ugovnoe delo”, *Status Quo*, 18 March 2008.

criminal proceedings against the city council employees, which was immediately satisfied.⁴⁶⁹ The General Prosecutor ordered to inspect the actions of the SBU in the city council, and by April the judge ruled in favour of the city council.⁴⁷⁰

Both the city council secretary and the city mayor had disputes with the local police and the Ministry of the Interior. In February 2008, the local police and the regional prosecutor disrupted one of the very first land auctions conducted in Kharkiv by Dobkin and Kernes, claiming that the sale of land was unlawful. Dobkin appealed to Yuriy Lutsenko, the Minister of the Interior, and the general prosecutor Oleksandr Medved'ko and even the President Yushchenko.⁴⁷¹ Kernes claimed that the law enforcement agents were acting in the interests of Avakov and his other rival Oleksandr Fel'dman, a supporter of BYUT.⁴⁷²

In a scenario that was fated to repeat itself in March 2014, in July 2008, Kernes was summoned to Kyiv for questioning on the account of a bodily injuries case in 2006 and attempted murder.⁴⁷³ He was also suspected of organising drug trafficking (cocaine storage and trade). The Minister of the Interior Yuriy Lutsenko promised to take Kernes for questioning by force.⁴⁷⁴ An attempt to prosecute Kernes and remove him from Kharkiv's political landscape was cut short because, as Lutsenko stated in November 2008, all criminal cases against Kernes were closed by the local court and the local prosecutor, therefore, no further prosecution was possible.⁴⁷⁵

5.2. Concentrated patronage

Under concentrated patronage system, one dominant network permeates regional politics. There is almost no interaction among the members of competing networks at the regional level, little chance for the elites to engage in learning about how to survive under different networks, and almost no scrutiny of the region

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“Piket v podderzhku deistvii SBU i protiv deistvii gorodskikh vlastei prokhodit vozle Kievskogo raisuda Khar'kova”, *Status Quo*, 31 March 2008

⁴⁷⁰ “Khar'kovskii gorsovet na sessii nameren priniat' obrashcheniia k prezidentu Ukrainy, genprokuroru i rukovoditel'iu SBU po povodu sobytii 18 marta v zdani merii”, *Status Quo*, 15 April 2008.

⁴⁷¹ “Khar'kovskii gorodskoi golova M. Dobkin nameren lichno dostavit' obrashcheniia gorsoвета po intsidentu v khode zemel'nogo auktsiona v tsentral'nye organy vlasti”, *Status Quo*, 3 March 2008.

⁴⁷² “Pravookhranitel'nye organy diskreditiruiut gorodskie vlasti v interesakh A. Avakova, A. Protasa I A. Fel'dmana – G. Kernes”, *Status Quo*, 16 April 2008.

⁴⁷³ “Police To Question Kernes On Four Cases”, *Ukrainian News*, 23 July 2008.

⁴⁷⁴ “Party of Regions outraged with arrest of acting Kharkov mayor”, *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 22 July 2008.

⁴⁷⁵ “Deistvii sudov i prokuratury, zakryvshikh ugovnyye dela, k kotorym imeet otnoshenie G. Kernes, mne kazhutsia zaangazhirovannymi – Iu. Lutsenko”, *Status Quo*, 25 November 2008

from the centre. Regional political elites' survival is heavily dependent on the dominant network's continuing access to power in the centre. Even if the popularity of the dominant network continues to decline in the region, as it happened with the Party of Regions after 2011, no alternative strong power centres emerge. Again, the nature of the political economy explains the relative insulation of the regional elites.

In the classic concentrated patronage region of Donetsk, the representation of political parties other than the Party of Regions was exceptionally low (Kuzio, 2010, Kuzio, 2011).⁴⁷⁶ As noted by Zimmer, already in the early 2000s, the region became completely "captured" by its political and economic elites (Zimmer, 2005, 370) and by 2014, the Party of Regions became "the only centrist party of power in Ukraine to capture a region and mobilize a stable voter base" (Kuzio, 2015, 175). In the 2006 regional elections, the Party of Regions won 120 out of 150 seats in the regional council,⁴⁷⁷ while the representatives of the rival networks of Bat'kivshchina⁴⁷⁸ and President Yushchenko's Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defence⁴⁷⁹ failed to secure any seats in either the regional or Donetsk city councils. In 2008, 90% of the regional council deputies were the Party of Regions' members.⁴⁸⁰ This domination of the Party of Regions became even more pronounced under the dominant chief executive of Yanukovych. In 2011, Donetsk regional council consisted of 166 deputies from the Party. The rest were various smaller parties, such as Strong Ukraine allied with the Party of Regions, and the KPU, which presented very few challenges to the Party of Regions. There were no representatives of Bat'kivshchina and Front Zmin. Donetsk city council was similarly dominated by the Party of Regions.⁴⁸¹ As a result, the local elites had no experience of interacting with the members of rival networks.

Overall, in the Donetsk region, conflicts were either of strictly commercial nature, as between Serhiy Taruta and Rinat Akhmetov (Aslund, 2006, 18 – 20)(Journalist 1, interview 19 07 2019) and, later, Akhmetov and Yanukovych's son Oleksandr, or socio-political as between the Party of Regions and a marginally popular Natalya Vitrenko's Progressive Socialist Party which however lost representation at all

⁴⁷⁶ See (Copsey, 2012), (Romanova, 2011) for regional voting results breakdown.

⁴⁷⁷ "Sovet vam regionalovskii da problemy", *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 April 2006.

⁴⁷⁸ "My sdelali vazhnyi shahg v demokratizatsii Donetsk'ka – Rotov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 April 2006.

⁴⁷⁹ "'Oranzhevye' Donetsk'koi oblasti uvereniy v svoei budushchei pobede", *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 April 2006.

⁴⁸⁰ "Partiia Regionov raskololas' v Donetsk'ke", *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 February 2008.

⁴⁸¹ "Donetskaia oblast – getto", *Novosti Donbassa*, 1 November 2011.

levels of local politics by 2010.⁴⁸² These conflicts were parochial, and the centre was never involved in them.

The marginally popular Vitrenko's Progressive Socialists regularly organised anti-NATO⁴⁸³ and "anti-fascist" meetings.⁴⁸⁴ They regularly challenged the Party of Regions for not making good on its promise to conduct a referendum on the status of the Russian language and for failing to proclaim Donetsk region a "territory free of NATO";⁴⁸⁵ they also challenged the regional council's budgetary, education, and public utilities policies throughout the years. Natalya Vitrenko commented on Yanukovych and the Party of Regions in an interview in April 2010, succinctly summarising the quite narrow views of the PSPU: "I think Yanukovych is deliberately avoiding all contact with me, because compared to the [strong] views of PSPU and my own views regarding Ukraine's ascension into the trade partnership with the European Union, the building of a common state with Russia and Belarus, the defence of the Russian language as the second state language, [and] Ukrainian fascism, the views of the Party of Regions and Yanukovych's followers are very uncertain and contradictory".⁴⁸⁶

It has to be said that most of the motions proposed by Vitrenko's party regarding the budgetary policies, public utilities and the status of the Russian language⁴⁸⁷ were defeated in the regional council. PSPU's mayoral candidate Volodymyr Marchenko commented on this in an interview in October 2011: "Our motions were [regularly] taken off the agenda [at the regional council meetings]... they did not let

⁴⁸² "Chto poterial Donetsk v 2010 godu", *Novosti Donbassa*, 15 December 2010. In fact Vitrenko's Progressive Socialists, BYUT and Oleksandr Moroz's Socialist Party lost representation in the city council after the November 2010 elections. According to the election results in November 2010, Donetsk city council was now composed of Party of Regions (84 deputies), 3 deputies from Communist Party and Strong Ukraine (2 deputies). See "V Donetsk kom gorsovetu poiavilis' glavy fraktsii", *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 December 2010. Donetsk regional council had 4 parties: the Party of Regions with 65% voices, Communists with 7% votes and Strong Ukraine with 3%. According to *Novosti Donbassa* journalists, Donetsk regional council therefore had 166 Party of Regions deputies, 9 deputies from the Communist Party, 4 from Strong Ukraine and 1 deputy from the Agrarian Party – 1. See "Itogi vyborov: Partiiia Regionov poluchila 92% mest v Donetsk om oblosovete", *Novosti Donbassa*, 7 November 2010.

⁴⁸³ "Donetskie "Vitrenkovtsy" zaiavliaiut, chto po rasporyazheniiu Yanukovicha Donetsk gotoviat k vstupleniiu v NATO", *Novosti Donbassa*, 18 May 2010; "Vozle Donnu Yushchenko zhduť storonniki Vitrenko s antinatsionalskimi nastroyeniiami", *Novosti Donbassa*, 17 January 2007; "U Vitrenko sobralis' mitingovat' protiv pamiatnika Mazape", *Novosti Donbassa*,

⁴⁸⁴ "V Donetsk e "Vitrenkovtsy" prignali bronevik na tsentral'noi ploshchad' goroda Foto", *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 May 2010; "Donetskie vitrenkovtsi protestuiut protiv UPA i rugaiutsia s militsiei", *Novosti Donbassa*,

⁴⁸⁵ "V PSPU uvideli otryv Ukrainy ot Rossii", *Novosti Donbassa*, 18 November 2010

⁴⁸⁶ "Vitrenko: pozitsiia Partii Regionov i okruzheniia Yanukovicha otkrovenno mutnaia i protivorechivaia", *Novosti Donbassa*, 7 April 2010.

⁴⁸⁷ "U Donetskogo oblosoveta net deneg na referendum po status russkogo iazyka", *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 September 2009.

us explain our position regarding the increase in public utilities tariffs... and the budgetary policies. Our deputies went on a hunger strike when the regional councillors failed to proclaim Donetsk region a territory “free from NATO”. Our motion to establish direct links with Russian and Belarusian factories was defeated.... Or consider our language motions...”⁴⁸⁸

As a testimony to a very low level of scrutiny of the region by the centre, the regional council protected and promoted people with openly Ukrainophobic views and anti-integrationist ideas such as the Donetsk city council secretary Mykola Levchenko, who was a self-styled mediator between the pro-Russian protestors and the regional council in April 2014. During the crisis of 2014, Levchenko gave a speech about federalisation of Ukraine in the Russian Duma and in 2014 he boasted of close personal relationship with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy to the pro-Russian protestors (Journalist 1, interview 19 07 2019).⁴⁸⁹ In June 2007, Levchenko stated that Ukraine was “a failed state”, with the two Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking halves constantly confronting each other. He openly asked the Kremlin to put pressure on the Ukrainian government and demand a special status for the Russian language in exchange for cheaper gas. In the same speech, he predicted a “civil war” for Ukraine. He also called Ukrainian a “folkloric language,” which caused great consternation in other regions in Ukraine. It is notable that he was never convicted for his Ukrainophobic views beyond a disciplinary action by his colleagues.⁴⁹⁰ According to my interview with Journalist 1, this was because Levchenko never put his radical views into action. Not only that, Levchenko was popular among the people in Donetsk. During the October 2012 parliamentary elections, Levchenko won 77% of votes in Petrovsk district of Donetsk city thus becoming a representative of the Party of Regions in the Verkhovna Rada.⁴⁹¹

What did this political independence mean from the point of view of the separatist crisis in 2014? Firstly, despite all the surveys conducted in the Donbas showing the low support for separatism and the willingness to remain in Ukraine, the regional authorities made the region an incubator of Ukrainophobic and anti-integrationist ideas. The one-time chairman of the Donetsk regional council

⁴⁸⁸ “Vladimir Marchenko – Partiya Regionov – partiia bezdarnosti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 October 2010.

⁴⁸⁹ See the famous 8th of April 2014 video where Levchenko and Akhmetov talk to the separatists https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01eWab_Wvvc

⁴⁹⁰ “SBU ne vzbuzhdala ugovnoe delo protiv Donetskogo gorsoвета – prokuror oblasti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 13 March 2007.

⁴⁹¹ “Levchenko stal narodnym deputatom”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 29 October 2012.

Borys Kolesnikov promoted the ideas of federalisation since 2002. These ideas were entertained by one of the key spokesmen for the local political elites during the crisis of 2014, the Donetsk council secretary and later the deputy of the Party of Regions in the Verkhovna Rada, Mykola Levchenko. Some separatist groups, such as Donetsk Republic, were allegedly financed by Kolesnikov.⁴⁹² This was however disconfirmed in my interview with Journalist 1 who said that “Donetsk Republic activists were very poor but very fanatical”. Kolesnikov reportedly financed Aleksandr Khriakov’s Committee of the Donbas voters (“Komitet Izbiratelei Donbassa”); Khriakov organised protest during the Euromaidan crisis of 2013 and then pro-Russian protests in spring 2014. He became one of the ministers in the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) embryo government.⁴⁹³ In 2008, the deputies created “Donbas Rus” group that was one of the key groups in protesting in 2014.

In summary, in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv the opportunities for elite learning were abound due to the ongoing conflicts among the members of the key competing networks. This explains why the members of the Party of Regions were so well versed in law and why they opted for the integral Ukraine in 2014. In the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk, on the other hand, the opportunities for elite learning were closed because of the exceptionally low penetration of the region by parties other than the Party of Regions. In the section below, I demonstrate how historically the elites in the regions used the time lag between the ouster of one network and the viable deal between the regions and the centre.

6. Time lag

Historically, each change of the governing informal network in the centre was accompanied by a time lag, during which both national and local elites were reCOORDINATING themselves around the emerging patrons. If an electoral contest preceded the change, then the elites had enough time to reCOORDINATE. In concentrated patronage regions, due to their relative isolation and dependence on the preferred network’s access to power in the centre, the elites developed a stable repertoire of bargaining ploys to preserve their concentrated patronage system and ensure that their preferred patrons continued to exert enough

⁴⁹² In November 2007, Donetsk Republic was officially banned.

⁴⁹³ “Partiia Regionov raskololas’ v Donetske”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 February 2008.

influence in the centre. Encouraging or defusing certain types of political protest was a strategy used by the elites to help them attain this goal. In diffused patronage regions, by contrast, bargaining with the centre was used only once and with little success. Over time, the elites in diffused patronage regions learnt that they would be marginalised if they resist the changes in the centre and therefore switched to the new patrons very quickly. In essence, due to the nature of diffused patronage regions, whereby the region was “plugged into” various patronage channels, these elites did not need their preferred patrons to continue occupying powerful positions in the centre.

6.1. Diffused patronage

Kharkiv’s single attempt at bargaining with the centre was undertaken by the late governor of Kharkiv Yevhen Kushnaryov during the Orange Revolution (November – December 2004). This attempt was highly circumscribed, compared to those in Donetsk and Luhansk, and eventually unsuccessful. Notably, Kernes, at the time the secretary of the city council, joined with his adversary Avakov to disassociate himself from Kushnaryov and defame him publically during a protest meeting in Kharkiv city.⁴⁹⁴ According to my interview with the Activist in Kharkiv, Kushnaryov was unsuccessful in his bargaining with the centre “because there were a lot of Kharkivites supporting the Orange camp” (16 07 2019).

Kushnaryov first condemned the Maidan and, as a staunch supporter of the Party of Regions, opposed the “premature” recognition of Yushchenko as president in western Ukraine. He claimed that a leaked document from Yushchenko’s Kharkiv headquarters contained a proposal to blockade Kharkiv regional administration and dismiss Kushnaryov.⁴⁹⁵ Accordingly, at the heyday of the Orange Revolution, Kushnaryov and the Party of Regions-dominated regional council began demanding federalisation for Ukraine. On 26 November 2004, the deputies of Kharkiv regional council proposed the creation of the South-Eastern Autonomous Republic,⁴⁹⁶ and Kushnaryov ruled that no budgetary transfers were to be made to the centre. The regional council deputies proposed to concentrate all power in the regional council⁴⁹⁷ and on 27 November, the council refused to recognise the central government.⁴⁹⁸ However, in

⁴⁹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGOXCyB5oaY>

⁴⁹⁵ Olena L’vova, “Kamo griadeshi?”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 3 December 2004.

⁴⁹⁶ “Kushnaryov ne hoche takogo mynulogo iak u Yanukovicha i vidmovliaet’sia vid separatizmu”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 30 November 2004.

⁴⁹⁷ “Khar’kovskii oblastnoi sovet vzial vlast’ v svoi ruki”, *Mediaport*, 26 November 2004.

⁴⁹⁸ “Vneocherednaia sessiia Khar’kovskogo oblsoveta: kak eto bylo”, *Mediaport*, 27 November 2004.

three days, the deputies of the regional council retracted their steps at the regional council's session, when they revoked several decisions made on 26 November, including the decisions to confer all power on a new executive committee in Kharkiv region, stop budgetary transfers to the state budget, and create voluntary self-defence units. The council also excluded the wording "and to immediately discuss the creation of the South-Eastern Autonomous republic" from one of the resolutions.⁴⁹⁹

Failing to force his way in the regional council, Kushnaryov became increasingly isolated and marginalised in his quixotic attempts to change the politics in the centre. Amid the continuing negotiations between the two opposing camps of Yushchenko and Yanukovych in Kyiv and the decision to rerun the elections, Kushnaryov handed in his resignation notice on 10 December.⁵⁰⁰ He continued criticising the Yushchenko government⁵⁰¹ and was dismissed by mid-February 2005.⁵⁰² By June 2005, Kushnaryov was no longer a deputy in the regional council.⁵⁰³ He blamed the new government for his loss of all influential positions in Kharkiv, claiming that its representatives were putting pressure on his subordinates and judges⁵⁰⁴ for him to be voted out of power.⁵⁰⁵ He created a new political party called "New Democracy," which promoted the ideas of federalisation of Ukraine⁵⁰⁶ and later merged with the Party of Regions.⁵⁰⁷

Kushnaryov's travails did not stop with his dismissal and loss of power in Kharkiv. In fact, his fate was a tall tale for the local elites, demonstrating that they could become victimised if they resisted the changes in the centre. As it happened, Kushnaryov was convicted of several crimes, including an attempt to violate Ukraine's territorial integrity and promote separatism. Criminal proceedings on these grounds began immediately in December 2004,⁵⁰⁸ when he was summoned to the General Prosecutor in Kyiv.⁵⁰⁹

⁴⁹⁹ "Khar'kovskii oblovet otmenil i priostanovil deistvie chasti reshenii, priniatykh im 26 noiabria", *Status Quo*, 30 November 2004.

⁵⁰⁰ "Evgenii Kushnaryov obratilsia v Kabmin s pros'boi osvobodit' ot dolzhnosti predsedatelia oblgosadmnistratsii", *Mediaport*, 10 December 2004.

⁵⁰¹ "Evgenii Kushnaryov: ia ne budu sotrudnichat' s vlast'iu, sformirovannoi Iushchenko", *Mediaport*, 31 December 2004.

⁵⁰² "E. Kushnaryov zaiavil o slozhenii polnomochii predsedatelia Khar'kovskogo oblovet", *Status Quo*, 8 February 2005

⁵⁰³ "Novyi glava oblasti. Kommentarii Khar'kovskikh politikov", *Status Quo*, 4 February 2005.

⁵⁰⁴ "Reshenie kievskogo raisuda g. Khar'kova vosstanavlivaet menia v dolzhnosti predsedatelia Khar'kovskogo oblovet – E. Kushnaryov", *Status Quo*, 8 February 2005.

⁵⁰⁵ "Kushnaryov dobrovol'no rasstanetsia s deputatskim kreslom", *Mediaport*, 15 July 2005.

⁵⁰⁶ "Tsel' partii "Novaia Demokratia" – federalizatsiia Ukrainy – E. Kushnaryov", *Status Quo*, 17 January 2005.

⁵⁰⁷ "29 Khar'kovchan zaregistrirovany kandidatami v narodnye deputaty Ukrainy po spiskam Partii Regionov", *Status Quo*, 19 December 2005.

⁵⁰⁸ "Kusharyova dopytaly iak separatysta", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 23 December 2004.

⁵⁰⁹ "E. Kushnaryov dal pokazaniia v Genprokurature Ukrainy", *Status Quo*, 23 December 2004.

He was also questioned by the General Prosecutor repeatedly in June 2005 on the account of other crimes, such as the unlawful use of bank loans to finance the building of Kharkiv metro (the budget code prohibits the regional council to take loans)⁵¹⁰ and held in custody in August 2005.⁵¹¹ In January 2007, Kushnaryov was killed in a hunting accident. It never became clear whether the killing was political,⁵¹² but the fact that Kushnaryov was gradually dispossessed of all political influence in Kharkiv and had to exit the political stage following his bargaining attempt is notable. In his place, Arsen Avakov, a rich Kharkivite with strong ties to President Yushchenko, was appointed.⁵¹³

6.2. Concentrated patronage

For the elites in concentrated patronage regions, it was important to sustain the concentrated patronage system each time after the governing network in the centre changed. It was significant because the elites had to protect large-scale private regional property and keep their hold on power. As a result, the regional elites in Donetsk developed a rich experience of bargaining with the centre. In fact, to my knowledge, Donetsk was the only region in Ukraine whose bargaining with the centre was systematic and successful, especially in the 1990s. Donetsk's long-serving functionaries must have had memories of these past examples of successful bargaining and lobbying and a rich inventory of bargaining ploys. Compared to the bargaining in Kharkiv region, where the governor Kushnaryov was eventually divested of all political power, Donetsk region's bargaining was less costly for the local political elites.

The governors and mayors engaged in bargaining with the purpose of keeping access to power in the centre through concentrated patronage. In the 1990s, bargaining was undertaken to extract economic concessions and keep the regional property intact. In 2004, an attempt was made at forcing a political change in Kyiv and make Yushchenko negotiate with Yanukovich thus securing access to power for the most important regional patron. In 2008, smaller-scale bargaining occurred, which served primarily to showcase the strength of the Party of Regions to their electorate and underscore the cultural

⁵¹⁰ "E. Kushnaryov znal, chto kredit mozhet brat' tol'ko gorodskoi sovet, oblastnoi sovet ne imel prava etogo delat' – A. Avakov", *Status Quo*, 25 August 2005.

⁵¹¹ "E. Kushnaryov pereveden iz gosptalia v SIZO", *Status Quo*, 19 August 2005.

⁵¹² The investigations were closed in 2009.

⁵¹³ "A. Avakov rekomendovan V. Yushchenko v kachestve pretendenta na dolzhnost' gubernatora Khar'kovskoi oblasti", *Status Quo*, 17 January 2005.

confrontation between the east and the west of Ukraine.⁵¹⁴ In 2008 – 2009, there was a severe economic crisis in the region, and the regional council blamed the current “Orange” government for this. There were protests and appeals to the centre in the region, with the regional council advocating early elections and a complete change of government.

Bargaining with the centre was first attempted in the mid-1990s, when the regional elites took advantage of the regional protest potential to press their demands for a certain degree of autonomy for the region and to keep access to power in the centre. Beginning in 1992, the head of the regional administration Vadym Chuprun repeatedly stated that the “primary task is independence in the decision of economic questions” and that “regions of Ukraine should have domestic and external independence” (Kovaleva 2007, 67). As a result, in late 1993, following the Donbas’ coal miners’ strikes in June, and that summer’s agitation for a national referendum of no confidence in president and parliament, Leonid Kravchuk issued a decree granting greater autonomy to the administrations of certain eastern oblasts - Donetsk including - for a two-year period ending in December 1995 (Kravchuk, 1999) 164). Then in March the same year, he ordered the wholesale transfer of the ownership of all state assets in housing and communal services to the regional governments (ibid.: 165). The miners’ strikes, the protest movements, and the Donbas “consultative” referendum of 1994 on federalisation were successful in forcing the pre-term presidential election in 1994, as a result of which Leonid Kuchma became President. A “Donbas” government comprising some members of Donetsk’s regional elite was formed in Kyiv. Yurkym Zviatkovskiy, the director of the Zasyadko coal mine, was appointed as the acting prime minister (Kovaleva, 2007, 68).

The most significant attempt at bargaining with the centre to preserve the concentrated patronage system was undertaken during the Orange Revolution when the protest potential in the region was very high and the elites took advantage of this protest potential in order to strike deals with the new patrons (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019). In contrast to Kharkiv, in Donetsk region federal

⁵¹⁴ In 2008 another “congress of deputies of all levels in South and East” in Severodonetsk was initiated by the local elites in Donetsk and Luhansk. This time it was meant to voice their opposition to Yushchenko’s humanitarian policies and protect the Russian speakers. To many in the centre, this was the repeat version of Severodonetsk of 2004. The SBU was summoned to investigate the congress and invite the participants for “an explanatory discussion” to prevent a separatist outburst as it was in 2004. The participants, however, got away this time.

arrangements were proposed on a variety of levels by a group of regional elites closely connected to Yanukovych. Keeping the concentrated patronage system would have given the elites an opportunity to control the governor appointments, protect their hold on power and keep their assets. Thus, on 28 November 2004, following the Maidan in Kyiv, Donetsk regional council decided to hold a regional referendum on granting Donetsk region a status of an autonomous region within the “Ukrainian federation”. A union of all south-eastern regions was proposed and the chairman of the Donetsk regional council Borys Kolesnikov, closely connected to Yanukovych, was chosen as its head. Kolesnikov proposed to create a “new federal state in the form of a South-Eastern Republic with the capital in Kharkiv,” if Yushchenko won the presidential election.⁵¹⁵

Both Donetsk mayor Luk'yanchenko and governor Anatoliy Blizniuk actively promoted autonomy arrangements for Donetsk. They also actively encouraged people to attend pro-Yanukovych protest events. What was the effect this bargaining? It must be said that throughout the whole of 2004, there were continuous negotiations between the Yushchenko's and Yanukovych's camps. As Kudelia demonstrates, elite pacts were negotiated, and the changes in the electoral law enacted in 2005 following the victory of Yushchenko guaranteed a political comeback to Yanukovych (Kudelia, 2007, 96).

Compromises had to be reached over the governor such as Logvinenko. “Yushchenko consulted Yanukovych and the Respected One (Shanovnyi – i.e. Rinat Akhmetov) on the subject whether this person would be an effective governor. Logvinenko was suitable for the president because he was a suitable figure both for Donetsk, Yekhanurov, and other political actors”, writes a journalist on this.⁵¹⁶

The last attempt at bargaining before 2014 to change the politics in the centre, again sanctioned by the local elites, was undertaken at the end of 2009. The economic crisis of 2008 – 2009 hit the region particularly hard; production was cut by at least one third,⁵¹⁷ especially at state mines and plants,⁵¹⁸ and there were wage arrears,⁵¹⁹ particularly at state mines. Some compared the situation to the year 2000.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁵ “Budet li Yanukovich i dal'she stradat' separatizmom?”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 November 2005.

⁵¹⁶ “Novyi gubernator Donbasu. Suto muzhyts'kyi rozrazhunok”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 19 May 2006.

⁵¹⁷ “Glavnye sobytiia Donetskoi oblasti 9 dekabria. Krizis unichtozhaet region”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 December 2008.

⁵¹⁸ “Glavnye sobytiia Donetskoi oblasti 17 dekabria. Ekonomika Donetskoi oblasti degradiruet, nachinaiutsia aktsii protesta”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 17 December 2008.

⁵¹⁹ “Donetskii oblastnoi balagan”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 March 2009.

⁵²⁰ “Glavnye sobytia Donetskoi oblasti 17 dekabria”,

The government raised taxes for private companies and increased utility tariffs.⁵²¹ There was a widespread fear that, as a result of the crisis, Donetsk might become a subvention-receiving rather than a donor region.⁵²² The governor Logvinenko was unable to overcome the crisis.⁵²³ In December 2009, there was a series of protests against the central government organised by the Donetsk trade unions. The protest numbered over four thousand people.⁵²⁴ The deputies of the regional council, in the notable absence of Logvinenko, summoned the regional council. The deputies sent the statement to the Rada demanding early presidential and parliamentary elections and a change in budgetary policies.⁵²⁵ In 2010, as a result of regular presidential elections, politics in the centre changed to the Donetsk local elites' advantage and Yanukovych was elected President.

In summary, owing to their unequal standing vis-à-vis the centre, both regions developed different strategies of dealing with the changing politics in the centre. In Donetsk, the default strategy was bargaining, while in Kharkiv bargaining was attempted once and foundered spectacularly. Given the success of the previous bargaining attempts by Donetsk elites, we therefore can expect them to undertake bargaining with the centre again in 2014 (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019).

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that, over time, Ukraine evolved into a more flexible polity or a “state of networks”. This introduced a certain degree of volatility in the politics in the centre and acted as a structural constraint on the regional elites. With the formal aspects of centre-periphery relations remaining the same throughout the period in question (the governors were appointed by the President), regions developed their own systems of patronage depending on the type of their political economy. In diffused patronage regions, large-scale enterprises were state-owned. Due to the nature of ownership and the state of the economy at those enterprises, patrons appointed clients from their own networks in order

⁵²¹ “Kak unichtozhit’ Donbass za 7 dni. Prakticheskii kurs ot Donetskikh vlastei”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 19 December 2008.

⁵²² “Gubernskii pessimizm”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 19 March 2009; Yevhen Shybalov, “Antykryzovi tantsi”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 6 February 2009.

⁵²³ “Ob’edinit’ Yushchenko, Yanukovycha i Tymoshenko ili tri v odnom Logvinenko”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 December 2008.

⁵²⁴ “Kak unichtozhit’ Donbass za 7 dni”.

⁵²⁵ “Donetskii oblastnoi balagan”.

to monitor the behaviour of the clients from competing networks. This improved transparency of information flows between the centre and the region. The diffused patronage region of Kharkiv “plugged into” various patronage channels, especially during the period of the divided-executive and secured resources for the enterprises thanks to the governors’ lobbying efforts. By contrast, in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk, owing to the nature of the enterprises themselves and other factors, the economy was largely privatised. Concentrating patronage and using the resources of actual acquaintance ensured that this property was protected (Hale, 2015). The concentrated patronage region of Donetsk benefitted from one network’s continuing access to power (Easter, 2000; Hale, 2015, 47; Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116). The most important financial patron of Donetsk region, Rinat Akhmetov, was able to secure resources for his enterprises when Yanukovych rose to power in the centre. Overall, Yanukovych’s career rise to the centre benefitted Donetsk region, which is consistent with the expectations in the literature on networks and Easter’s argument, in particular (Easter, 2000, 34). The elites in this region had vested interest in preserving the concentrated patronage system. I followed by the discussion of how the regional elites used the resources of their actual acquaintance with the various patrons in the centre to secure budgetary resources for their regions. I then discussed the aspects of elite learning (Grzymala-Busse, 2010) in diffused and concentrated patronage systems. I demonstrated how the practice of appointing clients from rival networks led to conflicts in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv and how this contributed to the processes of elite learning. This confirmed the theoretical expectation in the literature on informal politics in Eastern Europe. Grzymala-Busse writes on elite learning, the iterative process in which different networks are engaged, and how these worked for the elites in Poland and Hungary: “The more elites are advanced on the basis of pragmatic competence rather than ideological orthodoxy ... and the more these parties engage in informal negotiation with opponents and policy experimentation, the more diverse and useful the skill sets and reputations of elite actors”(Grzymala-Busse, 2010, 327) .

By contrast, the elites in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk were isolated and no elite learning took place in their region. This also reduced the transparency of information flows in that the regional elites were very rarely scrutinised by the centre. Finally, I discussed the time lag between the change of the informal governing network in the centre and a viable deal between the centre and the

regional elites. I have demonstrated that the elites in diffused patronage systems attempted bargaining with the centre only once and this was unsuccessful. By contrast, the elites in concentrated patronage systems had a rich experience of bargaining with the centre in order to preserve access to power and keep their concentrated patronage system. When there was an electoral contest preceding the change of the governing network, the elites encouraged popular protest in order to coordinate themselves around the emerging patrons and make sure that their preferred patrons continued accessing power in the centre (Hale, 2015). This follows from the key insight by Hale on electoral contest: “a victory in a head-to-head high-stakes contest between rival networks can be among the most powerful shapers of expectations as to which network is likely to be dominant in the future” (Hale, 2015, 342).

Chapter 5: Elites and Protest in Kharkiv and Donetsk, 2013 - 2014

1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I have discussed the aspects of my independent variable, that is the nature of patronage in the regions. I have demonstrated that the local elites function under different systems of patronage which are conditioned by the centralised nature of Ukraine and the political economy of their regions. Protest cataloguing revealed high levels of protest and protest violence in both regions in 2013 - 2014. Protest cataloguing, however, points only to the aggregate patterns of protest. It cannot account for the nature of protest in the regions. For example, it cannot account for the persistent radical demands made by the pro-Russian activists in Donetsk and moderate demands made by the pro-federal activists in Kharkiv. It also cannot account for the clandestine armed mobilisation in Donetsk and the lack thereof in Kharkiv.

In this chapter, I use process tracing and protest cataloguing to discuss the aspects of my intervening variable, which is radical or moderate protest. I start with process tracing the Anti-Maidan contention in both regions. I demonstrate that the Russian Spring did not emerge in a vacuum and not with the assistance of the ethnic patron Russia (Interview with Activist from Donetsk 27 07 2019), as the literature on conflicts and ethnic patrons (Jenne, 2007; Laitin, 2001) and the role of external state actors in conflict (Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2004; Salehyan, 2006) would predict. Instead, political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan protest were opened by the local elites. I define political opportunity after Sidney Tarrow as “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people’s expectations for success or failure” (Brockett, 2005; Tarrow, 1998, 76 - 77). Thus, local elites in eastern Ukraine opened political opportunities for specific types of activism for a variety of reasons. In Kharkiv, they were opened as part of the local Party of Regions’ elites’ response to the Euromaidan. This was because the Party of Regions’ elites were challenged by the local opposition parties and ordinary people in the past, which made these elites insecure and more aggressive towards protests that were not in their interest. In this way, they opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan in order to retain their hold on power, that is they acted in an “instrumental” or “rationalist” way towards the Anti-Maidan, as the general literature on elites in civil conflicts would predict (de Figueiredo, M., and Weingast, B. 1999;

Gagnon, 1994; Jones, B.,1999; Kaufman, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004; Woodward, S.,1999). In Donetsk, political opportunities were opened for the Anti-Maidan activists because the elites wanted to remain loyal to Yanukovich government's course, which is consistent with the expectations discussed in the literature on patronal politics (Hale, 2015). Therefore, before the Russian Spring commenced, both regions started with similar initial conditions, with the political opportunities being open for the Anti-Maidan.

I treat the change of the governing network in the centre in February 2014 as the critical juncture. With the change of the governing network, the intervening variable also changes: it becomes radical or moderate pro-Russian and pro-federal protest. Depending on the nature of the regional patronage – concentrated or diffused – the local elites would encourage radical or moderate protest. Therefore, I focus on the interaction between the local elites and specific types of activists in this chapter. I refute the hypothesis that *the political opportunities for specific types of activism are opened externally by ethnic patrons (H2)*. Through process tracing, I demonstrate that political opportunities were opened locally by the local elites. I also describe the pro-federal and pro-Russian challengers and demonstrate that they were relatively weak and disorganised prior to the Russian Spring, which is consistent with the observations made in the theoretical literature on political opportunity that describes its external nature (Almeida, 2008; Tarrow, 2011, 163; Tilly, 1978, 133). In addition, congruent with the theoretical literature on process tracing, I discuss alternative explanations of why there is an armed conflict in Donetsk region and no armed conflict in Kharkiv.

To reiterate my theoretical argument, in both regions, the local elites play a key role in channelling protest in their desired direction. In concrete ways, they create or close political opportunities for protest by allowing protestors to gather or banning protest through the local courts; by influencing protest action directly and personally; by endorsing or denouncing activists; and by refusing or agreeing to act on the key demands put forward by the activists. In diffused patronage regions, the local elites use their knowledge of the law to defuse radical protest, so that it does not disrupt their relations with the emerging patrons in the centre and the competing networks in the region. In concentrated patronage regions, the elites use the time lag between the ouster of the network and the viable deal with the centre to encourage radical protest. Protest therefore mirrors the elites' actions. In diffused patronage regions, moderate actors come

to the forefront of the protest wave and make moderate demands on the local elites. In concentrated patronage regions, radicals are encouraged by the local elites and given confidence to press with their demands.⁵²⁶ Therefore, this chapter seeks to test the hypothesis developed in the last sections of the theoretical introduction: *H3: the local elites would encourage or discourage specific types of protest depending on the regional patronage system.*

The chapter is organised as follows. I first discuss how political opportunities were opened for the Anti-Maidan in Kharkiv city and Donetsk region. I then describe the critical juncture – the change of the governing network in Kyiv – in detail. I then discuss the aspects of the moderate protest in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv and close with the discussion of the radical protest in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk.

2. Anti-Maidan in Kharkiv

2.1. General protest potential in the region

The chapter on the regional protest potential revealed that Kharkiv's top elites, and particularly Hennadiy Kernes and Mykhailo Dobkin, were constantly challenged both by the local opposition (and even their own) parties and ordinary people. The period of the “divided-executive,” that is when the centre experienced constant rotation of and confrontation among patrons from rival networks, was characterised by almost unending political and socio-economic protests in Kharkiv. These protests made the local elites more insecure but also more aggressive, in that they became quite possessive of their power. Relative quiescence was achieved during the period of one chief executive when Yanukovich was dominating the centre. This explains why the local elites reacted more aggressively towards the Euromaidan in 2013 and why they opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan protest.

The protests for the dismissal of Kernes and Dobkin picked up during the period of the divided-executive. In the year 2006 alone there were 12 major protests, with wide-ranging demands, numbering up to 1000 people. There were protests by agricultural and local market workers, and trade unions demanding Dobkin to fulfil his mayoral election campaign promises, that is to lower the utility tariffs and

⁵²⁶ It can be argued that the Russians captured the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk after summer 2014.

stop interfering with construction works. There were also protests against the directors of Kharkiv's state-owned enterprises.⁵²⁷ Over 25 protests specifically targeted the local elites, demanding the dismissal of Avakov, and Kernes and Dobkin. Out of these, 17 were mounted specifically against Kernes and Dobkin and numbered 5,000 people at most. Throughout 2007 – 2008, the protests demanding the dismissal of Dobkin and Kernes intensified. They were often held by the rival parties at the same time and in the same location. For example, following the new city council statute, which reportedly gave greater power to Kernes and required organisers of any protests to file their requests to conduct their protest with the city council at least 10 days in advance,⁵²⁸ BYUT organised a series of protests against the statute,⁵²⁹ and after the SBU stormed the city council in March 2008, protests were organised to support the actions of the SBU. Significantly, on 12 September 2007, a meeting demanding the dismissal of Dobkin and Kernes was organised by some Party of Regions' members and supporters, who claimed that the mayor and the city council secretary were discrediting the party.⁵³¹

Relative quiescence came only under the presidency of Yanukovich,⁵³² when most protests were of socio-economic nature, so that by March 2011, Dobkin claimed that there was “no opposition in the region”. “There are political forces in the region who are trying to oppose the government, but for some, this does not work because they are very weak; others don't do it properly,” he said.⁵³³

How did the elites respond to these protests? Some elites, particularly Arsen Avakov, openly participated in the protests organised by Our Ukraine⁵³⁴ and Bat'kivshchina.⁵³⁵ Political protest events attracted some attention from Dobkin and Kernes, who frequently labelled opposition protestors as “insane,” or claimed

⁵²⁷ “Okolo trekh tysiach chelovek s simbolikoi BYUT piketiruiut zdanie Khar'kovskogo gorsoveta (dopolneno)”, *Status Quo*, 27 February 2008; “Khar'kovskii front. Khroniki srazhenii”, *Status Quo*, 20 November 2006.

⁵²⁸ “Gorodskaiia vlast' pytaetsia obespechit' bezopasnost' grazhdan, ogranichivaia vozmozhnost' provedeniia mitingov na pl. Konstitutsii i pl. Svobody – M. Dobkin”, *Status Quo*, 6 July 2007.

⁵²⁹ “Predstaviteli BYUT provodiat piket vozle zdaniia Khar'kovskoi oblgosadministratsii”, *Status Quo*, 23 November 2007.

⁵³⁰ “Storonniki BYUT provodiat piket vozle zdaniia Khar'kovskoi obsgosadministratsii (obnovleno)”, *Status Quo*, 9 July 2007.

⁵³¹ “Miting s trebovaniem otstavki M. Dobkina i G. Kernesha prokhodit v Kieve vozle ofisa Partii regionov”, *Status Quo*, 12 September 2007.

⁵³² There was a short-lived protest, with the participation of politicians from opposition parties, Arseniy Yateniuk and Oleh Tyagnibok, in summer 2013. See “Oppozitsiia perekryla dvizhenie transporta na ploshchadi Konstitutsii”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 12 April 2013.

⁵³³ “Kernes vyigral sud u politicheskikh opponentov”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 26 October 2012.

⁵³⁴ “Arsen Avakov: ia boius' provokatsii”, *Mediaport*, 16 March 2007.

⁵³⁵ “Na ploshchadi Svobody prokhodit miting “za chestnye vybory”, *Mediaport*, 17 November 2010.

that protestors were being paid for participating in the meetings.⁵³⁶ Overall, the local elites' reaction to political protest in the city of Kharkiv became more vehement over the years. This was due to the fact that the Party of Regions' elites were engrossed in conflict with the competing networks and their popularity was not very stable.⁵³⁷

To counter political protest in Kharkiv, the Party of Regions' elites used courts. This contributed to the process of elite learning, which the elites took advantage of in spring 2014. This was confirmed to me in an interview with the Activist in Kharkiv who described his travails at the local court ruled by "the telephone justice": "They summoned me to the court and claimed that I filed a request which I did not file. They eventually prohibited all of us from holding our meeting" (16 07 2019). The activist claimed that this was done on Kernes' instruction. Kernes skilfully used one of the local courts to ban Our Ukraine's and Bat'kivshchina's rallies on two occasions. In March 2007, upon the request from the city council and Kernes specifically, Dzerzhynskiy district court banned Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defense opposition movements' leaders Mykola Katerynychuk and Yuriy Lutsenko from installing their stage on the Freedom Square and conducting a rally on 16 March. Kernes stated that he did not want "a second Maidan on the Freedom Square". He argued that the documents provided by Lutsenko and Katerynychuk to support their right to conduct this meeting were not originals.⁵³⁸ It was reported that Kernes came to the Square to express his personal indignation at the installation of the stage for the meeting.⁵³⁹ The protest organisers lodged an appeal against this decision with another local court.⁵⁴⁰ In the end, they

⁵³⁶ Dobkin, for example, blamed the regional administration and Avakov for organising protest and hunger strike to force the change of the directors at Kharkiv metro in February 2008. See "V. Yushchenko poobeshchal razobrat'sia v situatsii s Khar'kovskim metropolitenom – M. Dobkin", *Status Quo*, 15 February 2008.

⁵³⁷ Dobkin and Kernes did not enjoy stable popularity among their voters. According to a survey conducted between 14 and 19 December 2007 in Kharkiv, 63% of people thought that Dobkin was not suitable for his post, 51% supported the idea of local pre-term elections. 61% expressed negative attitudes towards Dobkin. Two-thirds noted that Dobkin did not fulfil his mayoral election campaign promises. As for Kernes, 76% of Kharkivites held negative attitudes towards Kernes. See "63% Khar'kovchan schitaiut, chto M. Dobkin ne sootvetstvuet zanimamoi dolzhnosti – sotsopros", *Status Quo*, 25 December 2007. According to a survey from 5 to 10 June 2008, over 30% regarded the work of Dobkin as unsatisfactory. Over 50% considered the creation of a Verkhovna Rada commission to investigate Dobkin and Kernes' actions as reasonable. Things changed dramatically in 2010. According to a survey of March 2010 conducted by Kharkiv branch of Gorshenin Institute of Governance (Kyiv), over 50% trusted the new governor Dobkin; 70 % did not trust Kernes. During the local elections, Kernes narrowly beat Avakov, winning 33.4% of votes, while Avakov won 31.9%.

⁵³⁸ "My ne dadim organizovat' na pl. Svobody novyi "Maidan" – G. Kernes", *Status Quo*, 15 March 2007.

⁵³⁹ "Opposition MP banned from staging rally in east Ukraine", *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics* 15 March 2007.

⁵⁴⁰ "Dzerzhinskii raionnyi sud Khar'kova zapretit Yu. Lutsenko provodit' miting na pl. Svobody", *Status Quo*, 16 March 2007.

conducted their rally on Rosa Luxemburg square, which is further away from central Kharkiv.⁵⁴¹ In a similar vein, in August 2011, the local elites attempted to ban a meeting in support of Tymoshenko through the local court.⁵⁴²

Political protest involving ordinary people was more complex in Kharkiv. In such protests, politics often quickly became enmeshed with the opposing parties' commercial interests. As such, the local elites were particularly energetic in banning protests that were concerned with land use because land tax constituted one of the major sources of tax revenues for the city and many local elites had extensive business interests in land. One such confrontation began in May 2006, when the city council suspended several decisions adopted by the previous convocation of the city council allowing construction to take place on certain land plots. On 13 July 2006, Target Trading Group, who was involved in these construction works, was calling on the Rada to dismiss Dobkin and dissolve the city council.⁵⁴³ On 16 December, the Target Group organised a meeting on 197 Klochkovska Street in order to announce the construction of a shopping mall on the plot of land that was repossessed by the city council. Local people, Kharkiv regional youth organisations, representatives of the Green party, and the city council members, together with Dobkin and Kernes, were present.⁵⁴⁴ The meeting turned into the "bloodiest confrontation in Ukraine since 2001," according to some journalists:⁵⁴⁵ the fence around the construction site was destroyed, and several people, including a city council deputy, were beaten. According to the member of Target Group supervisory board and the head of the "Miska Varta" (Gorodskoi Dozor or City Watch) political association Vladislav Protas, Dobkin and Kernes provoked the disorders, as a result of which "800 "young upstarts" beat 21 Target Group workers and 10 passer-bys".⁵⁴⁶ Protas immediately appealed to the Verkhovna Rada.⁵⁴⁷ He claimed that this purely commercial conflict turned into a political one by

⁵⁴¹ "Kak Kernes Lutsenko pomogal", *Status Quo*, 19 March 2007.

⁵⁴² "Razoshlis'. No obeshchaliut vernut'sia", *Status Quo*, 9 August 2011.

⁵⁴³ "Miska Varta Accuses Kharkiv City Mayor Dobkin Of Provocation Of City Disorders", *Ukrainian News*, 21 December 2006.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ "Vladimir Radchenko: v Khar'kove proishodiut massovye besporiadki, kotorykh strana ne znala s 2001 goda", *Mediaport*, 15 January 2007.

⁵⁴⁶ "Park Gor'kogo: test ukrayins'koi hromads'kosti na voshyvist'", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 1 June 2010.

⁵⁴⁷ "Mer Khar'kova i sekretar' gorsoveta sprovotsirovali massovye besporiadki i izbienie gorozhan – V. Protas", *Status Quo*, 18 December 2006.

Dobkin and Kernes because he and Target Trading Group supported the “Orange Camp” during the Orange Revolution.⁵⁴⁸

Following the Klochkovska Street confrontation, Vladyslav Protas initiated the collection of signatures for a referendum on the dismissal of Dobkin on the grounds that he was not fulfilling his election campaign promises and was putting pressure on the local small businesses. Kernes refused to register the people tasked with the collection of signatures: he claimed that the signatures were collected with breaches of due procedure.⁵⁴⁹ Protas followed this with a protest in front of the city council, with around 200 people participating; they vowed to involve courts and claimed that Kernes breached the “The Law on all-Ukrainian and local referendums”.⁵⁵⁰ Eventually, no litigation followed these protests.⁵⁵¹

Protas’ claims that Kernes and Dobkin provoked the disorders on Klochkovska Street were most probably true. Stanislav Markus’ research on property rights in Kharkiv confirms that Kernes especially was extremely jealous of how the local land was used. Markus writes in his book *Piranha Capitalism* (54):

In Kharkiv, a city in Ukraine’s Northeast, a limited-liability firm “Khar’kov-Moskva” signed a land lease agreement with the municipal authorities in 2009 that authorized the firm to build an ambitious business center, which would include a hotel and a helipad. The agreement transferred a swath of down-town land to the firm for twenty-five years, subject to subsequent renewal. Having secured all relevant permissions and attracted the necessary investors, the firm launched the construction. In 2010, a new mayor [Kernes] assumed power in Kharkiv. Immediately, the firm came under attack from the authorities. Based on damning reports from a multitude of inspecting agencies, the municipal court annulled the lease, after which the Procuracy opened nine administrative cases and one criminal case against the firm and its director and imposed an 840,000 hryvnia ... fine on the firm for the “unlawful use of land.” *According to the firm’s director, the new mayor did not mince words when he met with him in March 2011: “He [the mayor] said, “Let go of the site, or I will take it away!”*

In summary, Kharkiv region was a politically combustible region. Protests increased in intensity during the period of the divided-executive. Political protests enmeshed with socio-economic protests that

⁵⁴⁸ “Khar’kiv: Krov i reidery u vilykh rukavchikakh”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 21 December 2006.

⁵⁴⁹ “Initsiativnye gruppy po sboru podpisov dlia provedeniia referendumu o prekrashchenii polnomochii M. Dobkina i Khar’kovskogo gorsoвета sozdaiutsia s narusheniami zakonodatel’sтва – G. Kernes”, *Status Quo*, 6 November 2006.

⁵⁵⁰ ““Gorodskoi dozor” piketiroval Khar’kovskii gorsovet s trebovaniem zaregistrirovat’ initsiativnye gruppy referendumu po otzyvu gorodskogo golovy i gorsoвета”, *Status Quo*, 17 November 2006.

⁵⁵¹ “Khar’kovskaia obshchestvennaia organizatsiia “Gorodskoi Dozor” sozdala initsiativnuiu gruppu po sboru podpisov khar’kovchan v podderzhku provedeniia referendumu po otstavke M. Dobkina”, *Status Quo*, 4 April 2007.

threatened to dislodge the local elites, while the latter just about managed to survive the intra-elite conflict and the protest challenge by skilfully using the local courts.

2.2. Anti-Maidan in Kharkiv

Thus, for Kharkiv's top political elites, and the city mayor Hennadiy Kernes and the regional governor Mykhailo Dobkin, in particular, the Euromaidan that began in Kharkiv on 24 November 2013 stood in the long line of political protests that threatened to unseat them. Early Euromaidan rallies were organised spontaneously, without the participation of political parties,⁵⁵² but by people who were very critical of these top elites, such as Dmytro Pylypets.⁵⁵³ After 28 November 2013, Kharkiv's Euromaidan protestors demanded Yanukovych's resignation and the overhaul of the entire political system. Early on, they began compiling lustration lists, that is the lists of politicians and civil servants to be dismissed for corruption.⁵⁵⁴ They also began demanding Kernes' resignation from as early as 16 December.⁵⁵⁵ Over time, the Euromaidan protestors grew even bolder. On 23 February 2014, the Euromaidan protestors stormed Kharkiv regional administration building (HOGA) and demanded the immediate resignations of Dobkin and Kernes. They claimed that corruption was involved in the building of city roads, Kharkiv metro stations,⁵⁵⁶ and the Three Marys' church in central Kharkiv.⁵⁵⁷ They also pointed to the city authorities' negligence in handling the fire on the Khartron plant in January 2014 and the fact that no one was prosecuted for it.⁵⁵⁸

Hence the local elites' reaction to the Euromaidan protest was consistent with how they reacted to political protests in the past. When the Euromaidan began in Kharkiv, the city authorities took immediate

⁵⁵² "Bez flagov i politsimvoliki: "Khar'kovskii evromaidan" sobral okolo tysiachi chelovek", *057*, 25 November 2013.

⁵⁵³ "Est' tol'ko mig mezhdru aziatskimi sumerkami i evropeiskim rassvetom i nuzhna li nam budet rabochaia viza v Finliandiiu", *057*, 24 November 2013.

⁵⁵⁴ "Ministr MVD b'et trevogu: aktivisty "evromaidana" sostavliaiut "liustratsionnye spiski" chinovnikov, sotrudnikov "Berkuta" i dr.", *057*, 5 December 2013.

⁵⁵⁵ "Gepu v Dopu, Khar'kov – v Evropu". Podderzhat' "evromaidan" priekhali znamenitye pisateli brat'ia Kapranovy (foto, video)", *057*, 16 December 2013.

⁵⁵⁶ "Metro "Pobeda" gotova na 53 protsenta. Kernes lichno proveril khod stroitel'stva ob'ekta", *057*, 21 December 2013.

⁵⁵⁷ "Massovoi potasovkoi zakonchilsia miting protiv tserkvi za "Steklianoi struei", a na Pavlovom Pole dvoe arabov ugrozhali prokhozhim nozhami", *057*, 27 November 2013; "Kernes o protestakh khar'kovchan: "Ia im slomaui ruki-nogi, esli oni k chemu-to podoidut", *Censor.net*, 28 November 2013.

⁵⁵⁸ "Subbota na Evromaidane ob'javlena dnem traury v pamiat' pogibshikh vo vremia pozhara v Khar'kove", *Censor.net*, 10 January 2014.

action against the protestors. On 25 November 2013, Kernes prohibited all public gatherings, citing an imminent flu epidemic.⁵⁵⁹ This was probably an insincere move: according to a local epidemiological research organisation, no epidemic was expected in November. Other specialists presented statistics showing no major incidents of flu.⁵⁶⁰ On 2 December, the city council hastily ordered a fence to be built around the Freedom Square. The mayoral press service stated that this was done in order to prepare for the New Year celebrations.⁵⁶¹ Some Euromaidan meetings were simply prohibited. The organisers of the all-Ukrainian Euromaidan forum scheduled for 10 January claimed that their request to use public buildings was turned down. The activists were forced to rent private flats and offices of other political associations and parties.⁵⁶²

The local elites feared the Euromaidan movement because it threatened not only to unseat them but also disrupt the smooth work of the regional enterprises, for which they were responsible. The content analysis⁵⁶³ of the anti-Euromaidan statements made by the governor Dobkin, mayor Kernes, and the regional council's chairman and member of the Party of Regions Serhiy Chernov illustrates the point. As one can see, the issues relevant to the enterprises, such as wage freezes, job losses, and stability featured prominently in the statements.

⁵⁵⁹ “Kak Khar’kovchane k evromitingam priobshchalis”, *Vechernii Khar’kov*, 25 November 2013.

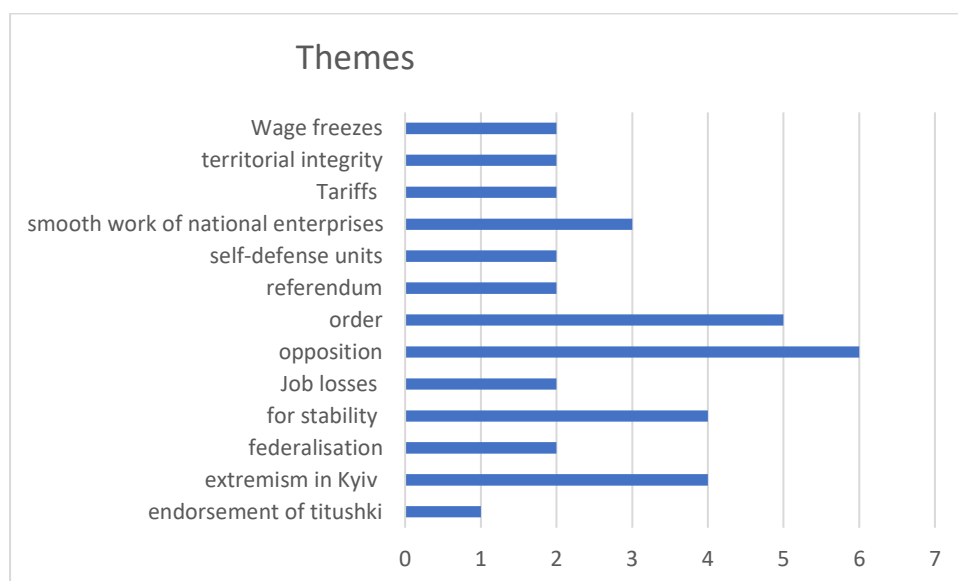
⁵⁶⁰ “Mer Khar’kova Gepa zapretit gorozhanam provodit’ massovye aktsii”, *Censor.net*, 25 November 2013.

⁵⁶¹ “Ploshchad’ Svobody obnesli po samye bordiury 2-metrovym zaborom (foto, dopolneno)”, *057*, 2 December 2013.

⁵⁶² “Organizatory foruma Evromaidanov zaiavliaiut o prepiatstvovanii so storony vlasti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 January 2014.

⁵⁶³ I used the regional internet newspapers such as *057*, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia* and *Slobids’kii Krai* to find articles that contained interviews or comments by these elites. I then selected the major themes or issues raised in those articles and counted how many times each theme or issue was mentioned.

Table 29: Content analysis of the local political elites' Anti-Maidan statements in Kharkiv



The qualitative data further supports the argument. According to the statement by the city council deputies, the events on the Maidan were threatening to disrupt the work of the local enterprises.⁵⁶⁴ Such claims circulated at Anti-Maidan meetings, with people expressing similar concerns.⁵⁶⁵ During a Party of Regions' conference on 28 November 2013, the governor Dobkin openly voiced his support for the course taken by Yanukovych.⁵⁶⁶ He stressed his support for Yanukovych in the presence of the major enterprise directors at the biggest Anti-Maidan rally organised by the Party of Regions on 30 November.⁵⁶⁷ In particular, Dobkin expressed his fear that because of the Euromaidan, Ukraine risked losing jobs in the east.⁵⁶⁸ On 2 December, during the emergency session of the regional council, the deputies issued a statement which read: "We support our people's desire to become part of the European community, with its high living standards, democracy, and rule of law. However, we must not cut our ties with the Russian Federation and the Customs Union countries, because the welfare of our citizens is dependent on our cooperation with them." Kernes and Dobkin later echoed this statement.⁵⁶⁹ They seem

⁵⁶⁴ "Prypynyty maidany ta ity pratsiuvaty zaklykaiut' u tsentri Kharkova", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 11 January 2014.

⁵⁶⁵ "Pochemu khar'kovchane molchat, kogda za oknom revoliutsiia?" *Mneniia ekspertov*, 057, 5 February 2014.

⁵⁶⁶ "Dobkin pidtrymav Yanukovicha", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 28 November 2013.

⁵⁶⁷ "Khar'kovskie regionaly podderzhali Yanukovicha (tekst rezoliutsii)", *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 28 November 2013.

⁵⁶⁸ "Mikhail Dobkin: "My poluchim volnu bezrabotnykh", *Vechernii Khar'kov*, 29 November 2013.

⁵⁶⁹ "Gennadii Kernes "mnozhit na nol" tekhn, kto hochet voyny. Interv'iu v efire radio "Russkaia sluzhba novosti". Polnaia versiia", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 4 February 2014.

to have fully appropriated the arguments made by the chairman of the regional council Serhiy Chernov: “We will not allow the situation to escalate, so that people cannot reach their work places. We will not allow state institutions and public utility providers to be paralysed [by the crisis]”. He then further admonished the opposition parties for not taking into account the effects of the Euromaidan on the enterprises: “The opposition demands the enterprises to stop working, but nobody is willing to claim responsibility [for what will happen] if they do stop working and paying taxes”.⁵⁷⁰

To showcase their strength, the local elites organised Anti-Maidan protests of their own. In fact, Kharkiv’s Anti-Maidan can be described as elite-led, compared to the Anti-Maidan in Donetsk. Out of 10 Anti-Maidan protests I have catalogued, 6 were organised by the local elites.⁵⁷¹ These protests were well attended, with as many as 100,000 people reported on 30 November,⁵⁷² and thousands on 12 January.⁵⁷³ These rallies were attended primarily by workers of state-owned enterprises and had the local Party of Regions’ functionaries, such as Dobkin, speak in support of Yanukovich. The other Anti-Maidan rallies were organised by the Communist Party of Ukraine and, unfortunately, were poorly reported. As to the protests organised by pro-federal and pro-Russian activists that were reported across various media, I was able to find only two. A protest on 15 December 2013 gathered a number of organisations, such as the Communist Party, Borot’ba, “Trudovaia Khar’kivshchina” (Labour Kharkiv), and the openly pro-Russian Sut’ Vremeni.⁵⁷⁴ It was attended by 80 people.⁵⁷⁵ The only other Anti-Maidan protest organised

⁵⁷⁰ “Kharkivs’ka vlada proty povalennia konstytutsiinogo ladu. Zaiava obrady”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 2 December 2013.

⁵⁷¹ It seems that not many people took the Anti-Maidan peaceful protests seriously. Several well-attended rallies organised by the local Party of Regions (one on 30 November reportedly gathered 100,000 people) drew criticism for the use of the administrative resource. Some people, especially those working in education and at state-owned enterprises, claimed that they participated at these rallies against their will. See “Po slukham, uchitelei khar’kovskikh shkol zavtra povezut v Kiev mitingovat’ za Tamozhnyi soiuz. Vlasti eto nazyvaiut dezinformatsiei”, 057, 27 November 2013. One reader of the Censor.net reported: “Today an acquaintance of mine who works in a kindergarten called me and said that she was compelled, under the threat of dismissal, to participate in a Party of Regions’ meeting on the Freedom Square on 11 January”. See “Gepa sgoniaet biudzhethnikov na miting 11 ianvaria “za Yanukovicha””, *Censor.net*, 9 January 2014.

A video from the rally on 30 November shows a group of young men, 16 to 17 years of age, being asked by a journalist why they came to the rally. They respond: “because our Serhiy Sergeivych asked us to come; he wrote to our school, so we can take a day off”. Upon questioning, whether they understand why they are here, they don’t respond. See “Govoriat Azarov priidet. Nas sniali s zaniatii”. Kak po kholodu na slet PR vystavili “koridor” iz molodezhi s flagami”, 057, 23 November 2013.

⁵⁷² “Tysiachi liudei u Kharkovi vysunuly svoii vymogy do ES”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 30 November 2013.

⁵⁷³ <http://dozor.kharkov.ua/photo/1001294/1146677.html>

⁵⁷⁴ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=960&q=%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3&w=wall-25354839_3059;http://archive.is/xaDfI

⁵⁷⁵ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?day=16122013&w=wall-38967458_971%2Fall;http://archive.is/RhVxf

independently of the local elites took place on 9 February 2014. It was organised by “Russkoe Veche” and numbered around 50 people. It is unclear whether Yuriy Apukhtin’s “Grazhdanski Forum” participated in the meeting because there were radical demands made at the meeting, such as the demand for Ukraine to join Russia.⁵⁷⁶

There is also some indirect evidence that titushki, who perpetrated violence against the Euromaidan protestors in Kharkiv (see the chapter on the protest potential), were connected to the local elites. This was confirmed to me in an interview with the Activist in Kharkiv (16 07 2019). The appearance of more sophisticated equipment used to disperse the Euromaidan protestors indicates that titushki might have been receiving some external funding. The increasing viciousness of the attacks against the Euromaidan protesters after they refused to leave Taras Shevchenko Square also indicates that titushki might have been paid by the local elites, who were extremely jealous of their power. One of the main organisers of Kharkiv’s Euromaidan, Dmytro Pylypets, openly and persistently claimed that titushki were hired by Kernes and Dobkin⁵⁷⁷ or, at least, acted at their sanction. When a group of “unknown people” burnt a car rented by the Euromaidan protestors in late December, Pylypets was adamant that Kernes was behind the arson. He claimed that Kernes offered money to the car owner in return for cooperation with the police against the activists.⁵⁷⁸ A detailed report produced by *MediaPort* using pictures and archival documents claimed that titushki were not connected with Kernes directly but indirectly via various other people, especially those whom Kernes assisted in their career rise. It found that the same group of people participated in the dispersal of the meeting organised by the Target Group in December 2006, the meeting to protect Gorky Park in 2011, and the Euromaidan rallies of 2013. The report claimed that titushki were hired by Maksim Museev, who first chaired the Lenin district council and then became a deputy of the city council under Kernes. Some of the organisers of the dispersals, such as Kirill Pronchenko, became members of the local Party of Regions after 2006. The local judges amnestied 6 out

⁵⁷⁶ “Neskol’ko desiatkov chelovek v tsentre Khar’kova trebovali ob’edineniia Ukrainy i Rossii”, 057, 9 February 2014.

⁵⁷⁷ “Na votchine “Gepy” napali na shtab Evromaidana”, *Censor.net*, 20 December 2013.

⁵⁷⁸ “Organizator khar’kovskogo “evromaidana” zaiavliaet, chto ego pytalis’ uvolit’ s raboty, a militsiia “sh’et” ugolovnoe delo”, 057, 18 December 2013.

of 14 perpetrators of violence and released others on parole, which indicated that the judges might have been influenced by the local elites.⁵⁷⁹

The claim that titushki received funding from the local elites is not too far-fetched, given that Kernes and Dobkin strongly supported violent action against the Euromaidan protestors in Kyiv. This was confirmed to me in an interview with the Activist in Kharkiv (16 07 2019). On 21 January, Dobkin stated that the laws passed by the Rada on 16 January tightening punishment for “extremist activities,” such as blocking and seizure of buildings, were not tough enough to counter the threat emanating from the radicals in Kyiv.⁵⁸⁰ On 30 January, during a session of Kharkiv’s regional council, the deputies of the Party of Regions, including Dobkin, called the Euromaidan activists “vandals and barbarians,”⁵⁸¹ and earmarked 150 thousand hryvnia for the treatment of the Berkut police officers wounded during the violence in Kyiv.⁵⁸² When by 25 January, local city councils were stormed and occupied by the Euromaidan protestors in 8 regions across Ukraine,⁵⁸³ including the Poltava region adjacent to Kharkiv,⁵⁸⁴ the elites became even more belligerent. During the creation of the Ukrainian Front on 1 February (below), Dobkin claimed that if the situation could not be resolved by peaceful means, the deputies would use other - unspecified - means.⁵⁸⁵

Thus, faced with the threat of the Euromaidan, the local elites fell back on their earlier tactics of countering political protests. By doing so, they inadvertently opened political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation activists. Not only that, Kharkiv’s top elites, and Dobkin especially, actively promoted federalisation and decentralisation during the Euromaidan phase of political protest. The request to conduct a national “referendum” on a limited set of political issues was raised repeatedly by the elites. Notably, this request did not contradict the provisions on national referendums in the Ukrainian

⁵⁷⁹ “Udarnyi batal’on”, *Mediaport*, 20 January 2014.

⁵⁸⁰ “Kharkiv regional governor says laws passed by Rada on January 16 not tough enough”, *Interfax: Ukrainian General Newswire*, 21 January 2014.

⁵⁸¹ “Novyi performans ot khar’kovskikh vlastei: deputaty massovo “vstupili” v raidy “Berkuta” i otdali spetsnazovtsam 150 tysiach griven”, *057*, 30 January 2014.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ “Territorii protesta rasshirilas’ do vos’mi regionov”, *Vechernii Khar’kov*, 25 January 2014; For Ivano-Frankivsk see “V Ivano-Frankovske tolpa zakhvatila zdanie administratsii”, *Vechernii Khar’kov*, 24 January 2014; For Lutsk see “V Lutske proishodit shturm zdaniia oblgosadministratsii”, *Vechernii Khar’kov*, 24 January 2014.

⁵⁸⁴ “Skol’ko zakhvachennykh oblgosadministratsii v Ukraine (karta)”, *057*, 26 January 2014.

⁵⁸⁵ “U Kharkovi stvoryly vseukraiins’ke ob’ednannia – alternatyvu Maidanu (foto)”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 1 February 2014.

Constitution. However, it highlights how frightened the local political elites were of the Euromaidan. Additionally, Dobkin and Kernes openly endorsed local Anti-Maidan groups and began forming their own self-defence units. This sent signals to the activists, which I discuss below.

As early as 12 December 2013, Dobkin claimed that federalisation would be the only way to save Ukraine from an impending civil war.⁵⁸⁶ On 12 January, during a press conference, Dobkin advocated a “radical federalisation” and stated that Ukraine failed as a unitary state.⁵⁸⁷ According to him, federalisation would allow regions to make their own decisions on the controversial questions of the language policy and historical monuments. On 15 January, Kernes officially demanded an all-Ukrainian referendum to remove deputy immunity, reduce the number of deputies in the Rada, and give the voters the chance to revoke deputies on any levels, including city mayors. This did not contradict the Constitution. On 1 February, when the Ukrainian Front was created, Dobkin reiterated this demand.⁵⁸⁸ Both Kernes and Dobkin referred to the Article 72 of the Ukrainian Constitution on the people’s right to hold a national referendum.⁵⁸⁹ On 20 February, at another conference, Dobkin proposed a local referendum, in case of a “coup”.⁵⁹⁰ The demand to hold a referendum on federalisation became part of the pro-federal activists’ mobilisation repertoire later on.

In response to the threat of the Euromaidan, the local elites began endorsing some Anti-Maidan groups and forming their own “self-defence units”. On 28 January Kharkiv’s Party of Regions deputies called for a “general mobilisation”. By this they meant the mobilisation of their supporters and spontaneous self-defence units, which would defend the city’s administrative buildings against the “extremists from the Maidan”. The self-defence units included the local Cossacks, the Union of Afghan fighters, Oplot, and those formed at the local factories and enterprises. These self-defence units were meant to patrol the city alongside the police.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁶ “Mikhail Dobkin: “Samoe strashnoe chto mozhet byt’ – eto grazhdanskaia voina”, 057, 12 December 2013.

⁵⁸⁷ Daryna Shevchenko, “Yanukovych’s Kharkiv due in legal trouble: Dobkin arrested, Kernes named as suspect”, *Kyiv Post*, 11 March 2014.

⁵⁸⁸ “Stvorenyii “Ukraiins’kyi front”: Dobkin rozpoviv pro zavdannia ta tsili (foto)”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 1 February 2014.

⁵⁸⁹ “Kernes vymagae referendum”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 15 January 2014.

⁵⁹⁰ “Dobkin rasskazal o svoikh deistviakh v khudshem dlia strany stsenarii”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 20 February 2014.

⁵⁹¹ “Stvorenyii “Ukraiins’kyi front””

The creation of the “Ukrainian Front” by the Party of Regions on 1 February ⁵⁹² seems to have demonstrated to the organisers of pro-federal protests in Kharkiv that the elites were on their side. A LiveJournal user wrote on his blog:

A Party of Regions’ congress is taking place at this very moment... in Kharkiv. Out of approximately six thousand people present, there are around one and half thousand leaders of organisations who can’t stand Yanukovych and the Party of Regions. But in the face of the Nazi invasion, they decide to set their disagreements aside and act together. This is because if Yanukovych is toppled by the banderites today, it will mean the end of Ukraine... the South-East does not want a civil war.⁵⁹³

The user quoted Dobkin and Kernes extensively on the blog. The Ukrainian Front was meant to include all Anti-Maidan organisations, such as Cossacks, the Union of Afghan fighters, openly pro-Russian Sut’ Vermeni, and others.⁵⁹⁴ According to Dobkin, the “activities of [the Ukrainian Front] will be directed towards freeing Ukraine from the occupational forces represented by the Euromaidan”.⁵⁹⁵ Within a week, Dobkin claimed that more than 2,000 people joined the Ukrainian Front.⁵⁹⁶ Yet, the only major meeting held by the Front was the Congress of the Deputies of the South-East on 22 February. It was organised before Yanukovych fled Kyiv, on 21 February.⁵⁹⁷ It was reported that the Front contravened the principle of the united and integral Ukraine. According to the same report, the SBU opened criminal proceedings against Dobkin and Kernes on the grounds of financing titushki, organising provocations, and stealing money via auctions.⁵⁹⁸

There is some evidence that the local fight club Oplot, an openly Anti-Maidan organisation with proclivities to radicalism, was also endorsed by the local elites. The official statements on Oplot’s

⁵⁹² “Gepa” zaiavil, chto “oni – ne “titushki”, a vot protestuiushchie – eto “otbrosy, kotorye zarazheny batsilloi Maidana”, *Censor.net*, 1 February 2014.

⁵⁹³ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/02/01/> ; <http://archive.is/CZLGI>.

⁵⁹⁴ “Pro-government mayor lambasts Ukrainian opposition in Russian paper interview” *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 15 February 2014.

⁵⁹⁵ “S’ezd “regionalov” v Khar’kove reshil sozdat’ “Ukrainskii front” dlia “bor’by s okupantami”, *057*, 1 February 2014.

⁵⁹⁶ “Kharkiv governor notes strong ties to Russia, hopes for support”, *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 8 February 2014.

⁵⁹⁷ “Dobkin u Kharkovi zbyrae vsikh deputativ pivdannogo skhodu i Krymu”, *Ukrayinska Prada*, 21 February 2014.

⁵⁹⁸ ““Ukrainskii front” samolikvidirovalsia: “Dobkina i Kernesha zhdet SBU, esli nado my smozhem mnohoe rasskazat’ novomu glave SBU”, *057*, 22 February 2014.

webpages supported Yanukovych, echoed Dobkin in calling the Euromaidan activists vandals and barbarians,⁵⁹⁹ and expressed solidarity with other Anti-Maidan organisations, such as the Union of Soviet Officers,⁶⁰⁰ Communists, and the political club Yugo-Vostok (South-East).⁶⁰¹ Oplot fighters participated in the Anti-Maidan rallies in Kyiv⁶⁰² and Kharkiv. Quite possibly, they joined titushki in attacking the Euromaidan Forum on 11 and 12 January.⁶⁰³

Oplot invoked the use of violence against the Euromaidan early on. The club's founder, Evhen Zhilin, was adamantly against the Euromaidan. He opposed the destruction of Lenin monuments across Ukraine and expressed his anger at the marches held in honour of Stepan Bandera. In an interview with a prominent Ukrainian journalist, Mustafa Nayyom, Zhilin claimed that the Euromaidan protestors gathered unlawfully, and that the state must use its monopoly on violence to evict them from the Maidan.⁶⁰⁴ On 25 January, on their official website Oplot distributed information that the Euromaidan activists were going to arrive on "50 buses" to Kharkiv to take over the administration, "topple the local government"⁶⁰⁵ and attack the office of Oplot. They attempted to recruit people and arm them.⁶⁰⁶ On 31 January, Zhilin stated in an interview that a direct action must be taken to defend the city.⁶⁰⁷ On 7 February, Zhilin pledged the local people to prepare for a possible war.⁶⁰⁸

⁵⁹⁹ <http://www.oplot.info/content/harkov-spokoyno-bez-protestov-i-vandalizma-gotovitsya-ko-vstreche-novogo-goda-foto>; [https://vk.com/wall-17147496_2709](https://vk.com/wall-17147496?q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD&w=wall-17147496_2709); <http://archive.is/JSE7Y>.

⁶⁰⁰ <http://www.oplot.info/tegi/antimaydan>

⁶⁰¹ <http://www.oplot.info/content/evromaydan-glazami-harkovskih-kommunistov-i-zhiteley-goroda>

⁶⁰² <http://www.oplot.info/content/sohranim-ukrainu-harkovchane-stali-chastyu-mnogotysyachnogo-antimaydana-video>

⁶⁰³ "Pod krylom Gepy v Khar'kove stvorena tselaia set' provlastnykh "shturmovikov". Fotoreportazh", *Censor.net*, 21 January 2014; <http://www.oplot.info/content/oplotovcy-zashchishchayut-harkov-ot-nashestviya-evromaydanovcey>

⁶⁰⁴ "Yevhen Zhilin – lider hromads'koi organizatsii "Oplot". Interview Mustafi Nayyomu", *YouTube*, 5 February 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGP5DuZDLNA>.

⁶⁰⁵ <http://www.oplot.info/content/srochno-dlya-harkovchan-kotorym-ne-bezrazlichna-sudba-rodного-goroda#sthash.UPB4PBYH.dpuf>; [https://vk.com/wall-17147496_2814_r2861](https://vk.com/wall-17147496?q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD&w=wall-17147496_2814_r2861); <http://archive.is/NrQ12>.

⁶⁰⁶ [https://vk.com/wall-17147496_3867_r3892](https://vk.com/wall-17147496?q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD&w=wall-17147496_3867_r3892); <http://archive.is/87S3z>

⁶⁰⁷ <http://www.oplot.info/content/amerikanskiy-evromaydan-i-oborona-harkova-evgeniy-zhilin-razveval-sluhi-ob-oplote>; https://durdum.in.ua/uk/main/article/article_id/20195.phtml.

⁶⁰⁸ <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/profile-of-evgeniy-zhilin-a-yanukovych-supporter-willing-to-use-force-against-euromaidan-protestors-336476.html>

According to some opposition newspapers, Dobkin and Kernes protected Oplot and its leader Zhilin. On 1 February, an opposition newspaper reported that Oplot became part of the Ukrainian Front,⁶⁰⁹ and that Zhilin was asked by the government to help defend Kharkiv.⁶¹⁰ In his controversial interview on 4 February 2014, Zhilin claimed that he could “break someone’s leg and gorge out someone’s eye” with impunity: “I explain the provisions of the law to all my fighters. I am a candidate of juridical science. I tell them that you won’t have any problems if you knock out an attacker’s eye, rip their arms or legs off. If they have a club, you can kill them”.⁶¹¹

Thus, the culmination point in terms of political opportunity for pro-federal protest in Kharkiv was reached on 22 February, during the Congress of All Deputies of the South-East, Crimea, and Simferopol. At the Congress, the deputies condemned “fascism,” refused to cooperate with the centre, and passed all the reins of power to the local councils and administrations.⁶¹² Zhilin was present at the Congress and invited people across the south-east to mobilise into self-defence units.⁶¹³ According to Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2, the pro-federalisation activists hoped that, following the Congress, Yanukovych would form “a government in exile” in Kharkiv. However, the Congress was disbanded at noon, and Yanukovych failed to appear, let alone form a government. By evening, all the elites had left the Congress. Protest Organiser 2 was disappointed in the local elites, calling them “degraded” and “people without ideas and principles”: “all of these elites went to politics because politics was giving them special privileges” (Interview 28 09 2018). Rumours emerged that both Kharkiv governor Mykhailo Dobkin and Kharkiv mayor Hennadiy Kernes, the organisers of the Congress, fled to Russia.⁶¹⁴ According to Yuriy Apukhtin, Kernes left Kharkiv for Dnipropetrovsk to speak to Ihor Kolomoiskiy.⁶¹⁵

⁶⁰⁹ “Lider “Oplota” zaiavil, chto mozhete ubivat’, i emu za eto nichego ne budet”, *057*, 4 February 2014.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ “Ukrainian TV warns “semi-legal armies” being set up in east, west of country”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics* 10 February 2014; “Zhilin: ia govoriu svoim boitsam: vy mozhete vybit’ glaz, otloamat’ ruku ili nogu. Esli na vas zamakhnutsia palkoi – mozhete ubit (video)”, *057*, 7 February 2014.

⁶¹² “Ukraine’s Southeast seeks to restore constitutional order, thousands gather in Kharkov”, *Russia Today*, 22 February 2014.

⁶¹³ “Zhilin prizval mestnye vlasti vooruzhit’ otriady samooborony”, *057*, 22 February 2014; “Evgenii Zhilin OPLLOT na s’ezde v Khar’kove”, *YouTube*, 22 February 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uEvKotjBd0>.

⁶¹⁴ “Lidu oznakomilis’ s kabinetami sbeshchavshego iz strany Dobkina”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 February 2014.

⁶¹⁵ Kernes, whose “Ukrainian Front” Kolomoiskiy considered to be a major faux pas, seems to have heeded to the latter’s invective “not to tempt the fate” and not to play with the unpredictable pro-Russian forces. See “Kolomoiskiy predupredil Kernesu ob otvetstvennosti za separatizm”, *Nahnews*, 22 February 2014. In an interview, Boris Filatov, the deputy of the odious Dnipropetrovsk governor, claimed that Kernes would often call their office and ask for advice. See “Boris Filatov rasskazal, kak emu so tovarishchi udalos’ to, chto ne smogli Taruta i Akhmetov”, *057*, 23 April 2014. As it is known, Kolomoiskiy was at the forefront of countering pro-Russian threats

The ex-interior minister Yuriy Lutsenko stated that the SBU launched criminal proceedings against both Dobkin and Kernes on the grounds of separatism.⁶¹⁶

Protest Organiser 2's disappointment with the local elites was retrospective. In this period, the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation activists still believed that the elites were on their side. A LiveJournal user quoted Kernes on his blog on 23 February to demonstrate that Kharkiv was resisting "the Nazi plague".⁶¹⁷ According to his blog, it was only from 26 February when the local elites began "betraying" Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation activists, with Dobkin deciding to run for presidency and Kernes failing to clear the HOGA building of the Euromaidan activists.⁶¹⁸

Thus, the local elites created political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan and pro-federal activists in Kharkiv. By demonstrating their strong Anti-Maidan attitudes throughout the Euromaidan phase of political protest, the elites provided certification and legitimation to these activists. By engaging in federalisation and decentralisation rhetoric, they provided rhetorical devices that the activists used during the Russian Spring.

3. Anti-Maidan in Donetsk

As the chapter on the protest potential has illustrated, the Euromaidan in Donetsk region was less popular than the Euromaidan in Kharkiv. Activist from Donetsk stated in an interview that the Euromaidan protest in Donetsk was far less popular than its counterpart in Kharkiv: "it numbered no more than 100 people," he said (27 07 2019). Donetsk region's Euromaidan activists began making radical demands, such as to dismiss the regional governor Andriy Shyshatskiy, only later, in February 2014.⁶¹⁹ The city's mayor Oleksandr Luk'yanchenko attributed this low turnout for the Euromaidan to popular attitudes in the region. He cited an opinion poll, according to which some 57.5% of Donetsk

in his region where they eventually failed to take hold. See "Desiat' tysyach za moskalia": SMI Ukrainy o rastsenkakh za strel'bu po liudiam", *Vesti.ru*, 17 April 2014.

⁶¹⁶ "SBU nachala ugovnyye proizvodstva iz-za separatistskikh zaiavlenii Dobkina i Kernesha – Lutsenko", *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 February 2014.

⁶¹⁷ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/02/23/>; <http://archive.is/e7gLi>.

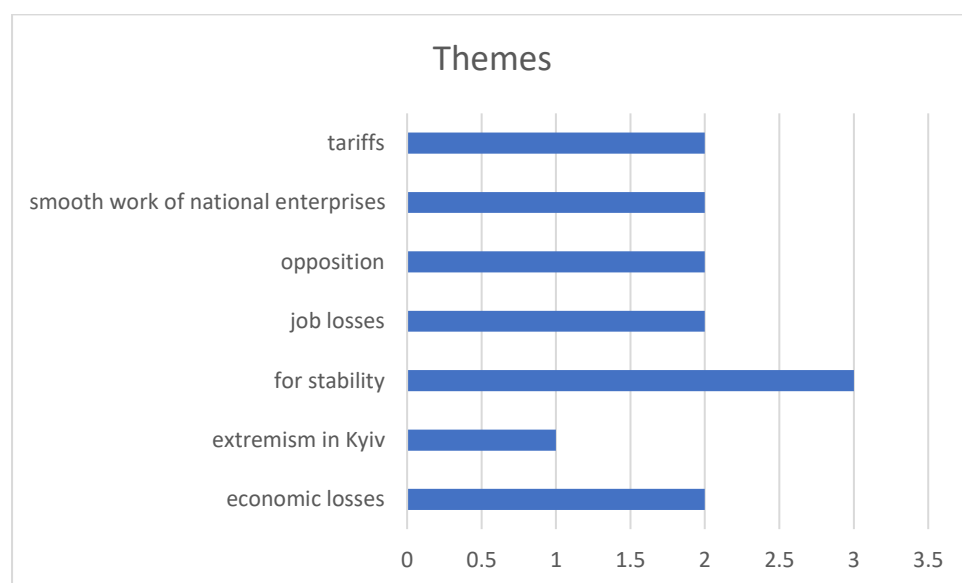
⁶¹⁸ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2014/02/26/>; <http://archive.is/daqxx>.

⁶¹⁹ "Nikto ne zabyt, nikto ne zabyto: gorodskoi golova Slavianska Nelia Shtepa popala v liustratsionnyi spisok Donetskogo evromaidana", *Slavgorod*, 26 February 2014.

residents chose the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia over the integration with the European Union (27.2%).⁶²⁰

The ways in which the local elites reacted to the Euromaidan can be explained by their expectations about Yanukovych's regime. Due to the extreme concentration of patronage both regionally and nationally over the previous decade, the local elites expected Yanukovych to stay in power (Interview with Activist from Donetsk, 27 07 2019). The local elites' behaviour can also be explained by the low popularity of the Euromaidan protest. Accordingly, the elites made far fewer anti-Euromaidan statements and these statements were much less vitriolic than those made by Kernes and Dobkin in Kharkiv. Overall, like their Kharkiv counterparts these statements were strongly pro-Yanukovych and pro-status quo.⁶²¹ Below I present the content analysis of some of the local political elites' statements.

Table 37: Content analysis of the local political elite's statements during the Euromaidan/Anti-Maidan phase in Donetsk region



Source: *Novosti Donbassa*

⁶²⁰“58% zhytelei Donetska hotiat integrirovat'sia v TS – mer”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 November 2013.

⁶²¹ “Donetsk region's governor: Our families need wellbeing, calm, not slogans, disturbances”, *Ukrainian National News Agency*, 2 December 2013.

Again, as in Kharkiv, the most important issues highlighted were stability, the fact that the signing of the Association Agreement would lead to job losses across the region, and the closure of factories.

Significantly, there were far fewer statements made against the opposition forces (Udar, Bat'kivshchina).

This can be attributed to the fact that the elites rarely interacted with those opposition forces in the region.

The qualitative evidence bears out the same conclusion. On 27 November, during the extraordinary session of the regional council, the deputies of the Party of Regions unequivocally supported the President.⁶²² Similarly, during a press-conference on 2 December the regional governor Shyshatskiy stated that the region would rally in support of Yanukovich.⁶²³ Similar statements were made in city and town councils across the region. In a typical statement, Shyshatskiy emphasised the threats the Euromaidan spelt to the local industries: “We do not want to lose the industrial region of the Donbas. If the President signs the agreement with the EU, there will be economic risks, especially in the Donbas. For example, the machine-building enterprises will incur the most significant losses. Everywhere in the machine-building industry, the volume of exports to Russia and Kazakhstan is decreasing. This industry is not suited for exports to Europe. If we sign the agreement, 150 thousand work places would be lost, and 100 thousand of these in Donetsk region only. 80% of our industries is connected with Russia and this is how it has been for decades”.⁶²⁴

The elites attempted to rein the Euromaidan in but their attempts at doing so were quite mild compared to those in Kharkiv. For example, on 8 December, Shyshatskiy set up the “crisis management headquarters” in Donetsk “to promote dialogue with political parties, work collectives, public organisations and trade unions”.⁶²⁵ The organisation died down later. Compared to the vitriolic Ukrainian Front, which aimed to encompass all pro-Russian organisations, had reportedly enormous resources (Kernes and Dobkin were blamed for theft from its fund), this was a very mild undertaking. Moreover, in an interview, Shyshatskiy referred to the Ukrainian Front as an organisation that failed to take hold in

⁶²² “Donetskie regionaly sobiraiutsia idti v narod zashchishchat' Yanukovicha”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 November 2013.

⁶²³ “Donbass to protect President – governor”, *Unian*, 2 December 2013.

⁶²⁴ “Soglashenie s ES unichtozhit 100 tys. Rabochikh mest v Donetskoj oblasti – gubernator”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 November 2013.

⁶²⁵ “Donetskie “regionaly” poruchili stab-shatbom rukovodit' “cheloveku s britvoi””, *Novosti Donbassa*, 7 December 2013.

Donets'k and dismissed it altogether as an “informal gathering”.⁶²⁶ Compared to the radical actions taken by Kernes in Kharkiv, when he prohibited meetings to be held for a week since the incipience of the Euromaidan in Kyiv, the elites in Donets'k region did not prohibit public meetings. In a mild attempt to control the protest, they prohibited mounting tents and booths on public squares.⁶²⁷

To counter the Euromaidan, the elites in Donets'k region organised their own Anti-Maidan meetings. This was confirmed to me in a brief email exchange with Elite Member 1 who said that “the Party of Regions, myself including, organised meetings *periodically* to protect law and order” (22 07 2019). These meetings were not very well-attended. The chairman of the Independent Trade Union of miners of Donbas Mykola Volynko claimed that miners were forced to attend the meetings under the threat of dismissal. Opposition parties reported calls from relatives and friends working in education who claimed to have been forced to attend the meetings.⁶²⁸ It is hard to ascertain whether the people gathered on their own will or were gathered under the threat of dismissal.⁶²⁹ On the video of the Party of Regions' Anti-Maidan meeting on 4 December, one can see that those who were allegedly “dragged” to the meeting against their will are acting quite emotionally and explain their reasons for being there in quite emotional ways, which are hard to choreograph.⁶³⁰ By 7 December, the elites in Donets'k claimed to have managed to stage just one modest pro-regime demonstration. One planned demonstration even had to be cancelled due to an expected low turnout.⁶³¹

Some members of the local political elites attempted to get involved with the Anti-Maidan. These members of the local elites later became the key actors during the Russian Spring protests and vied to be the mediators between the pro-Russian protestors and the centre. Among them was Serhiy Bogachov who was present at some Anti-Maidan meetings, according to some reports. Bogachov was reportedly

⁶²⁶ “V Donetskoi oblasti “Ukrainskii Front” poka ne sozdaiut – gubernator”, *Ostrov*, 3 February 2014.

⁶²⁷ “Evromaidan v Donetske: militsionerov i kommunal'shchikov bol'she, chem storonnikov evrointegratsii (foto)”, *062*, 25 November 2013.

⁶²⁸ “Shakhterov Donetskoi oblasti zastavliaiut vykhodit na miting v podderzhku Yanukovicha – nezavisimyi profsoiuz”, *Ostrov*, 3 December 2013; See here a teacher from Gorlovka complaining about the threat of dismissal if no show “Protivno chuvstvovat' sebia bydlom, kotoroe stroem goniati na miting”. V Gorlovke uchitel'ia riskuiut ostat'sia bez raboty, esli ne pridut podderzhat' prezidenta”, *Gorlovka.ua*, 25 January 2014.

⁶²⁹ “Donetskie deputaty i chinovniki sobralis' na 20-tysiachnyi miting podderzhki Yanukovichu”, *062*, 4 December 2013.

⁶³⁰ „Miting PR v Donetske 4 Dekabrya 2013 goda”, *YouTube*, 4 December 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw4Yb0kuots>

⁶³¹ “In Ukraine's Industrial East, The Silence Is Deafening” *Radio Free Europe Documents and Publications*, 7 December 2013.

key in circulating various rumours which spurred local pro-Russian activists to mobilise.⁶³² Activist from Donetsk told me in the interview that Bogachov was trying to “earn some political capital because everyone at the time was vying to be the new mayor, as the current mayor Luk’yanchenko was heading towards the end of his term” (27 07 2019). Bogachov, however, tried hard to disconfirm these allegations. One of the most important rumours was based on the alleged imminent arrival of the Right Sector radicals from the Maidan to Donetsk. On 27 January, Bogachov reportedly stated that “700 armed radicals from the Maidan, on several buses and cars, are arriving to Donetsk region in order to cause mass disturbances and storm and occupy administrative buildings”.⁶³³ Bogachov claimed to have gained this information from “insider sources”.⁶³⁴ This was later repudiated by the chief of Donetsk police Mykola Kryuchenko.⁶³⁵

Rather than attempting to ride the Anti-Maidan wave, like their counterparts in Kharkiv, by late January, the local elites came to rely on the local activists for the defence of the city against “the radicals”. These were networks of existing local activists, such as the members of the Afghan fighters’ Union, Cossacks and others. This was confirmed to me by Elite Member 1. Journalist 1 in an interview with me also stated that the elites engaged with the activists on some level but not as intensely as in Kharkiv. On 27 January, the mayor posted the message saying that the region was expecting the arrival of activists of the Right Sector on 8 buses.⁶³⁶ Several bus-loads of miners came to defend the regional administration building. Grifon and Berkut were deployed too. The activists of the radical movement Donetsk Republic were said to have participated in the “defence of the OGA”.⁶³⁷ Cossacks and Afghan fighters came to the defence of the OGA as corroborated in the evidence provided by a pro-Russian activist LiveJournal user donbassrus.⁶³⁸ He claimed that he met his friends from the National Freedom-Fighting Movement

⁶³² “”Titushki” izbili aktivistov Donetskogo Evromaidana”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 January 2014.

⁶³³ “V Donetskoy gorsoвете uznali, chto v oblast’ edut “boeviki Maidana” i vveli voiska v zdanie”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 January 2014.

⁶³⁴ “V Donetskoy ekstremistov net. Sekretariu gorsoveta pokazalos’?”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 February 2014.

⁶³⁵ “Donetskkiye chinovniki ne mogut razobrat’sia skol’ko k nim edet “boevikov Maidana”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 January 2014.

⁶³⁶ “Vlasti priznali, chto “boeviki Maidana” ne sobiralis’ brat’ shturmom Donetskuii OGA”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 31 January 2014.

⁶³⁷ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=29012014&w=wall-3223620_24279%2Fall; <http://archive.is/j2tQI>.

⁶³⁸ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/01/28/>; <http://archive.is/FsLDT>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=29012014&w=wall-3223620_24279%2Fall; <http://archive.is/j2tQI>.

(NOD) next to the OGA.⁶³⁹ The scare was real. One of the workers of the city administration in Donetsk claimed that the administration received hundreds of calls from pensioners, teachers and others demanding to explain what was going on.⁶⁴⁰ On 28 January, the rumour was repudiated and the miners and activists returned home.⁶⁴¹ By the beginning of February, local Cossacks patrolled the centre of Donetsk together with the police. They did so on their own accord, according to press reports and donbassrus user.⁶⁴² On 5 February, the Cossacks announced their decision to guard the OGA.⁶⁴³ They said they guarded the Constitution.⁶⁴⁴ The Cossacks were endorsed by the Party of Regions only post factum, after they started patrolling the streets.⁶⁴⁵

Finally, the elites refused to participate in the federalisation talks. This was because Yanukovych and the Party of Regions stopped using federalisation as their campaign promise when Yanukovych became President. This was a regular political ploy used by the Party of Regions. They would often use federalisation as their campaign promise, only to renege on it once in power. *Ukrayinska Pravda* reported extensively how Yanukovych used federalisation as his campaign promise in 2005, only to denounce it once in power in August 2006.⁶⁴⁶ In fact, in 2010, the then-governor of Donetsk region Anatoly Blyzniuk advocated some form of decentralisation whereby the regional administration would stipulate the salaries of the state employees. He also wanted the region to participate in the law-making process, promoted budgetary independence of the region, and envisaged it as “part of a Ukrainian federation”. According to a source in the presidential administration, these ideas “enraged Yanukovych”.⁶⁴⁷ It was speculated that

⁶³⁹ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/01/28/>; <http://archive.is/FsLDT>.

⁶⁴⁰ “Vlasti priznali, chto “Boeviki Maidana” ne sobiralis’ shturmom brat’ Donetskuiu OGA”,

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/01/28/>; <http://archive.is/FsLDT>.

⁶⁴³ “V Donetsk kazaki vziali pod okhranu oblgosadministratsiiu”, 062, 5 February 2014. Corroborated here <https://yadocent.livejournal.com/521863.html>; <http://archive.is/J4CyE>.

⁶⁴⁴ “Cossack squads to protect “order” set up in Ukrainian president’s stronghold” *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 26 January 2014.

⁶⁴⁵ “Two thousands of Cossacks patrol streets in Donetsk region”, *ITAR-TASS World Service* 5 February 2014.

⁶⁴⁶ “Donetsk pidkyne nastupnei Verkhovnoi Radi temu federalizatsii?”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 15 March 2005; “Igri neukrainskikh patriotiv: ostannii shans”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 11 July 2005; “Yanukovich dav start “vpered”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 5 December 2005; “Federatsiia vid Yanukovicha i Akhmetova”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 6 December 2005; “Federastychnyi lokhotron”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 7 December 2005; “Yanukovich vidmovivsia vid federalizmu”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 10 August 2006.

⁶⁴⁷ “Donetskii bumerang separatizma dlia Yanukovicha”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 April 2010.

Blyzniuk's dismissal shortly after this was caused by his federalisation ideas. In line with their loyalty to Yanukovych's government course, on 10 February, Shyshatskiy stated that talks of federalisation were irresponsible and could lead to the loss of sovereignty for Ukraine.⁶⁴⁸ In early February, the Communist Party filed a motion with one of the town councils to redraw the map of Ukraine along federal lines, which would have stopped the regional taxes from being transferred to other regions, where, according to the representatives of the Party, the power was usurped by "illegal" people's councils.⁶⁴⁹ The Party sent the request to the Rada through the Novoazovsk district council.⁶⁵⁰ The request was rejected. Moreover, not only did the Donetsk prosecutor reject the request; he also threatened the Party with criminal proceedings on the grounds that they endangered the territorial integrity of Ukraine by their proposal.⁶⁵¹ Overall, it seems that only Mykola Levchenko, one of the members of the Party of Regions and, later, a self-styled mediator between the pro-Russian radicals and the centre in spring 2014, was consistently advocating federalisation.⁶⁵²

If by 28 January, the Western and Central Ukraine were engulfed in a full-fledged rebellion, with violence against both people and property, the Anti-Maidan and pro-Russian resistance that was independent of the Party of Regions in Donetsk region was much milder. According to my brief exchange with Elite Member 1, "there was no Anti-Maidan in Donetsk" (22 07 2019). Journalist 1 also confirmed the small-scale nature of the Anti-Maidan in Donetsk as did Activist from Donetsk (27 07 2019); the latter told me in the interview that "they brought some titushki to these meetings, but this was mostly for the media". Immediately following the Euromaidan, on 26 November, the Russian Bloc organised a meeting against the Euromaidan with slogans such as "Donbass for the Customs Union", "An association with the EU is a crisis and destitution", "European values = libertinage and degradation" and others.⁶⁵³ On the following day, the Communist Party – always the first to counter the Euromaidan challenge across the entire

⁶⁴⁸ "Donetskii gubernator: my ne mozhem seichas sebe pozvolit' igrat' v federalism. Eto vse mozhnet plokho zakonchitsia", 062, 10 February 2014.

⁶⁴⁹ "Communist Party suggests transferring to federal form of government in Ukraine", *Interfax: Ukrainian General Newswire*, 4 February 2014

⁶⁵⁰ "Raisovet v Donetskoi oblasti prizval zakrepiť federalizatsiiu v Konstitutsii", *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 February 2014.

⁶⁵¹ "Kommuniti schitaiut, chto vlasti Donetskoi oblasti ispugalis' natsionalistov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 7 February 2014.

⁶⁵² "Levchenko agitiroval za federalism, Shishatskiy – protiv", *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 February 2014.

⁶⁵³ "V Donetsk mitingovali protivniki Evromaidana (obnovleno)", *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 November 2013.

Ukraine – held a meeting against the signing of the Association Agreement.⁶⁵⁴ Donetsk Republic organised its very first Anti-Maidan meeting jointly with the Russian Bloc on 7 December. Like its counterpart on 26 November, judging by the video, it was attended by 10 people at most and they were mostly onlookers. User donbassrus claimed that there were “hundred people”, even if the video clearly shows that there were very few. The claims made revolved around the threats posed by Ukrainian nationalism and the European Union, the necessity to preserve the Russian language and culture and the desire to unite with the historical Russia.⁶⁵⁵ One is struck by the great number of people who could be amassed to come to the Party of Regions’ meeting and these small meetings organised by pro-Russian forces in Donets’k.

Yet by mid-January, pro-Russian resistance groups began proliferating, without the participation of the local elites. Journalist 1 told me in an interview that these groups were aided by the criminal networks of Armen Sarkissian from Horlivka (19 07 2019). This resistance was mostly clandestine. Both Journalist 1 and Activist from Donets’k told me that it is highly unlikely that these groups had arms. Apart from the more or less established Anti-Maidan groups, such as the institutionalised party Russian Bloc and the marginal Donetsk Republic, there sprung up “Rada Narodu”, a complete unknown “Donetsk Resistance”, and by 12 February, “Oborona Donetska”.⁶⁵⁶ The Rada Narodu participated in the meeting on 9 January.⁶⁵⁷ The city council informed the journalists that the organisation did not exist before and this was the first time they filed a request to hold a meeting.⁶⁵⁸ Rada Narodu then frequently participated in the subsequent Anti-Maidan meetings. Activist from Donets’k told me in an interview that he was not aware of these groups because “they were too small; I was busy with my business at the time” (27 07 2019).

⁶⁵⁴ “Evropa ne zabivai nam baki!” – Donetskii kommunisty mitinguiut”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 November 2013; <https://frankensstein.livejournal.com/2013/11/27/>; <http://archive.is/61aNU>.

⁶⁵⁵ <http://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2013/12/08/>; <http://archive.is/Z9KA2>.

⁶⁵⁶ <https://frankensstein.livejournal.com/2014/02/15/>; <http://archive.is/rzFXq>.

⁶⁵⁷ “Na Donetskoi Evromaidane potrebovali ot militsii proverit’ zakonnost’ aktsii “bortsov s kureniiem”, 062, 11 January 2014.

⁶⁵⁸ “Na Donetskii Evromaidan prishli provokatory s plakatami o zhurnalistakh – video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 January 2014.

The aim of the “Oborona Donetska” group was to guard the city against the “imminent arrival of the radicals”.⁶⁵⁹ In one of their rare interviews, Denis Yurtsov stated that he joined the group “when I found out that radicals from the West (Western Ukraine) and Maidan are coming here to occupy the regional administration. I did not want pro-fascist organisations to come to my city and dictate their own rules.”⁶⁶⁰ By 11 February, “Oborona Donetska” gave their official press conference, where they announced the aims of the movement more officially: “the defence of the rule of law and order in the region, the support of Berkut and constitutional order, the containment of nationalist and extremist organisations and movements”.⁶⁶¹ They participated in the meeting on 12 February where they demanded economic federalisation of Ukraine and supposedly attacked Euromaidan protesters.⁶⁶²

By late January, the “radicals are coming” scare reached its most intense proportions in Donetsk. On 23 January 2014, the Russian Bloc began online recruitment on its social media platform for “volunteers” to form “self defence units”.⁶⁶³ On 28 January, when the scare entered its most intense phase, Anti-Maidan Mariupol,⁶⁶⁴ Donetsk Republic, Russian Bloc and other groups began recruiting people en masse on their social media platforms. On 27 January, a typical post included the following: “Dear citizens! It has been reported that the police are waiting for the “dear guests”. We have plenty of those who want to meet them (with sarcasm). Just in case, those who are in the centre, be ready to defend your rights to peaceful assembly. If we need help, we will post the request here”; “According to some unconfirmed reports, there are 2 buses [with the radicals] that have been held at the border [of the region] and 2 buses that have arrived. There are enough police to defend administrative buildings, and there are guys who can help. At the moment all is quiet”.⁶⁶⁵ On 27 January, it was posted on Donetsk Republic’s wall: “Now we have the information that the Banderovtsy want to send their provocateurs to occupy administrative buildings in southern and eastern cities of the country. We have some information about them travelling on 8 buses.

⁶⁵⁹ “Kto stoit na “oborone” Donetska – obzor pressy”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 17 February 2014.

⁶⁶⁰ “My ne “titushki”: troe gorlovchan rasskazali, pochemu vstupili v gruppu “Oborona Donetska” i ot kogo zashchishchali oblgosadministratsiu”, *Gorlovka.ua*, 11 February 2014.

⁶⁶¹ “V pomoshch kazakam i shakhteram na oboronu Donetska vstali ne titushki”, *062*, 11 February 2014.

⁶⁶² “V tsentre Donetska s lozungami “federalism ili razval” mitingovali “zashchitniki Donbassa””, *062*, 12 February 2014.

⁶⁶³ https://vk.com/wall-50935961?day=23012014&w=wall-50935961_735%2Fall; <http://archive.is/EbXbs>.

⁶⁶⁴ <https://vk.com/wall-64994882?day=27012014> ; <http://archive.is/wip/TPSIR>.

⁶⁶⁵ <https://vk.com/wall-64994882?day=27012014>; <http://archive.is/TPSIR>; https://vk.com/wall-64994882?day=27012014&w=wall-64994882_698%2Fall; <http://archive.is/wip/Fm5ZM> .

Our guys need help because there are too little police and too few of our guys. Please repost”.⁶⁶⁶ On 31 January, Donetsk Republic began recruiting people into “people’s self-defence units to for the purpose of defending administrative buildings in Donets’k”.⁶⁶⁷

By 27 January, it was clear that the initiative was finally wrested from the local political elites to local activists. Serhiy Bogachov claimed that everyday he was receiving calls from activists willing to join people’s self-defence units that formed spontaneously.⁶⁶⁸ It is important to note that in Kharkiv the elites announced the formation of the self-defence units *first*⁶⁶⁹ whereas in Donets’k the pattern was reversed. The process of such spontaneous formation via personal networks is described on one of the blogs. At the end of January, there was a conference to celebrate the anniversary of the Pereyaslav Rada.

Representatives of Russia and “Russian movement of Ukraine”, including Khriakov and Donetsk Republic activist Aleksandr Matyushin participated. When they found out that there were allegedly “busloads” of banderovtsy moving towards the city, they spontaneously organised a Coordinating council. Donetsk Republic activist Matyushin was the chairman. They then began calling to everyone they knew: Cossacks, Afghan veterans, and retired army officers – to mobilise them into a self-defence unit.⁶⁷⁰ Around 15 February, a “national freedom-fighting unit” was formed in Mariupol. The members of this unit came to the square next to the town theatre to hold an anti-fascist meeting.⁶⁷¹

It was unclear whether there were indeed busloads of banderovtsy. The fact that the OGA was not stormed and occupied or there was no significant violence in Donets’k until mid-March testifies that they were mythical. Yet one source stated that they were stopped at the border. It said that some of them came on foot or by car to the city and tried to storm the city library,⁶⁷² but this was never confirmed in any newspaper reports or on any social media accounts I have read.

⁶⁶⁶ <https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=29012014> ; <https://archive.is/NfENs>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=27012014&w=wall-3223620_24234%2Fall; <http://archive.is/BWnTl>.

⁶⁶⁷ <https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=22022014> ; <https://archive.is/2y5qp>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=31012014&w=wall-3223620_24525%2Fall; <http://archive.is/c2Zqk> .

⁶⁶⁸ <https://yadocent.livejournal.com/521863.html> <http://archive.is/J4CyE>.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ <https://yadocent.livejournal.com/525094.html> <http://archive.is/6ncmw>

⁶⁷¹ “Stop – fashizm! V Mariupole pod stenami khrama Mel’pomeny obrazovalsia antimaikan”, 0629, 15 February 2014.

⁶⁷² <http://haile-rastafari.livejournal.com/87171.html>; <http://archive.is/DUBZr>; <https://yadocent.livejournal.com/525094.html> <http://archive.is/6ncmw>.

In summary, political opportunities were opened in Donetsk region for Anti-Maidan activists, partially by the local elites because they wanted to remain loyal to Yanukovych and expected him to stay, partially independently of the local elites. This was particularly true of various less known groups, such as Oporona Donetska and Rada Narodu. Others, such as Donetsk Republic, Russian Bloc and “Donbas Rus” actively participated in the Russian Spring that commenced after the critical juncture which I discuss below.

4. Critical juncture

I treat the events of late February 2014, when the governing network changed in Kyiv, as the critical juncture. This is because both regions followed the same path in November 2013 to February 2014: political opportunities were open for the Anti-Maidan protest, which later morphed into the Russian Spring protests (Interview with the Activist in Kharkiv 16 07 2019), and the activists began making claims on the local elites. In February 2014, however, the sudden change of the governing network brought the change in the local elites’ behaviours and in my intervening variable (radical or moderate protest). According to Journalist 1, an expert on Donetsk region, “nobody was expecting Yanukovych to leave; this was an extraordinary situation for the local elites” (19 07 2019). Similarly, Activist from Donetsk told me in the interview: “When Yanukovych left, the entire institution of the “watchers” (*smotriyashchie*) that included the people in the city and regional council, - the *vertical* of power that has been forming over the years, - collapsed”. Activist from Donetsk described a situation of great confusion in the city: “I contacted the press office of the mayor who did not know what to do”. I describe this extraordinary situation below in more detail.

After a several months-long standoff between the Euromaidan protestors and government forces in Kyiv, the escalation of violence against the protestors in February, and a series of talks involving the opposition parties and diplomatic representatives of the EU, on the night of 21 February, Yanukovych left Kyiv in an unknown direction. The intricate patronage system revolving around his figure and the political-economic conglomerate of the Party of Regions finally collapsed with his sudden disappearance. This was preceded by a steady stream of defections from the Party at both the regional and national level, turning into a

cascade after 18 February violence against the protestors in Kyiv.⁶⁷³ The result was that by March 2014, Yanukovych's "majority in parliament evaporated" (Hale, 2015, 236).

At first, the defections did not affect the domination of the Party of Regions and, specifically, the Donetsk clan in the government. Neither did they affect the expectations about whether the regime was going to stay (Hale, 2015, 237 – 238). Deputies began leaving the Party of Regions on 30 November, following the police brutality against the Euromaidan protestors. Most of these were regional deputies, such as Inna Bohoslovskaya from Kharkiv. The exception was Serhiy Liovochkin, an important member of the "gas lobby" (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015), who resigned from his position as the Head of the Presidential Administration on 30 November.⁶⁷⁴ We can therefore argue that in the Rada and Presidential Administration, there was a sudden concentration of power around the Donetsk clan, whose members, such as Mykola Azarov, began resigning or "leaving in an unknown direction" only after 18 February escalation in Kyiv.

After the escalation of protest violence in Kyiv in late February 2014, however, the Donetsk clan's domination of government was severely undermined. Not only did Yanukovych's disappearance contribute to this but also the sheer numbers of deputies who were leaving the Party of Regions. How they left also affected the morale of the remaining party members. Thus, by 23 February, 72 deputies left the Party.⁶⁷⁵ These included its key members from the Donetsk clan, such as the party's founder and Rada speaker, Volodymyr Rybak; Vitaly Khomutynnik, the head of the Tax and Customs Committee in the Rada;⁶⁷⁶ and Iryna Akimova, the first deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, who had ties to Rinat Akhmetov.⁶⁷⁷ Some deputies were leaving demonstrably during the Rada sessions.⁶⁷⁸ Some were simply not attending the sessions. It was reported that during the Rada session on 20 February, there were only 10 Party of Regions deputies present.⁶⁷⁹ The effect was such that on 22 February, the Party of

⁶⁷³ "Regionaly vykhodiat' iz partii", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 19 February 2014.

⁶⁷⁴ "Bunt u "Rehionakh": Zhvaniia vyishov iz fraktsii", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 30 November 2013.

⁶⁷⁵ "Fraktsiiu PR zalyshyly vzhe 72 deputaty", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 23 February 2014.

⁶⁷⁶ "Regionaly" pokydaiut' fraktsiiu: Khomutynnik, Dzhyga, Buriak, Poliachenko", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 21 February 2014.

⁶⁷⁷ "Vid Yanukovicha tikaiut' iogo radnyky?", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 21 February 2014.

⁶⁷⁸ "Nardepy ii dali tikaiut' z riadiv Partii rehioniv", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 22 February 2014.

⁶⁷⁹ "Poshuk vyhodu z kryzy pereneseno do Verkhovnoi Rady", *Holos Ukrainy*, 21 February 2014.

Regions was in a minority in the Rada.⁶⁸⁰ By the time the new Cabinet was formed on 27 February 2014, the opposition parties Bat'kivshchina, Udar and Svoboda dominated the parliament.⁶⁸¹

It can be argued that there was a certain element of fear accounting for these defections. As has been argued by Kudelia and Umland, in 2014 Ukraine witnessed an unprecedented level of street violence. This also included anti-elite violence. This street and anti-elite violence created conditions that were radically different from those in 2004, during the Orange Revolution, when the deputies from the east also engaged in bargaining with the centre. Since December 2013, there were attacks on the Party of Regions' offices that resulted in deaths of some deputies.⁶⁸² There were rumours that the radical group "Right Sector" was putting pressure on the Party of Regions' members in various regions.⁶⁸³ According to the head of the Rivne city organisation of the party, Alla Yvoylova, the "Right Sector" put severe pressure on the members of the party and their families.⁶⁸⁴ After Yanukovych left, the "Right Sector" appealed to the new government to disband the Party of Regions.⁶⁸⁵ Numerous deputies, especially those from Donetsk and those who rose to prominence under Yanukovych, such as Oleh Tsarev, claimed that they were threatened with violence by the radicals. At a Party of Regions' conference, a deputy from Donetsk, Tetiana Bakhteeva, described in detail how she was prevented from travelling to Donetsk on family business by an armed group of people in Kyiv.⁶⁸⁶ In a retrospective interview granted to a Ukrainian talk show, Mykola Levchenko from Donetsk (he left Ukraine for Russia in September 2014) described the dispossessions of the Party of Regions' deputies by the Right Sector.⁶⁸⁷ Oleh Tsarev described his experiences in the Rada in graphic detail: "I called my friend Vitaly Hrushevskiy. He did not respond. Then I called his aide who told me that Hrushevskiy has been beaten up next to the Parliament. They have taken voting cards from some deputies and started voting on their behalf. It is possible that some

⁶⁸⁰ "Tihipko: PR vidmovylas' vid kandydatury spikera", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 22 February 2014; "Poshuk vykhodu z kryzy pereneseno do Verkhovnoii Rady".

⁶⁸¹ "Rada zibralasia na subotne zasidannia. Rehionaly ii dali vykhodiat' z fraktsii", *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 22 February 2014.

⁶⁸² "Opozytsiia "pyliae" portfeli. "Rehiony" gotuiut'sia otrymaty svoe", *Ekonomichna Pravda*, 23 February 2014.

⁶⁸³ "Ukrainian Radicals Deny Putting Pressure on Law Enforcers' Families", *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 25 February 2014.

⁶⁸⁴ "Local Head of Ukraine's Former Ruling Party Seeks Protection From "Radicals", *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 25 February 2014.

⁶⁸⁵ "Pravyi sektor prizval prekratit' deiatel'nost' partii regionov i KPU", *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 February 2014.

⁶⁸⁶ "Konferentsiia partii regionov vse video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 March 2014.

⁶⁸⁷ "Nikolai Levchenko – gost' talk-show "Lyudi. Hard Talk" Vypusk ot 13.11. 2014", *YouTube*, 14 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFsxv0SIV7U>.

deputies from whom the cards have been taken are locked up somewhere in the Rada. There is no Symonenko (the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine), nor many other deputies, who were beaten up earlier, in the Rada. But now somebody is calling me and pretending to be Mikhail Chechetov, with a voice which does not sound like his at all, telling me that I should leave Ukraine urgently. Otherwise, I will be arrested. I told him... that I am not going to leave Ukraine.”⁶⁸⁸

All this presented unique problems for the Party of Regions and specifically, the Donetsk clan. The remaining Party of Regions’ deputies were forced to ally themselves with other deputies and opposition parties to help form the new government. Various new factions emerged on this basis, including such vague entities as “Economic Development” (Ekonomichnyi Rozvytok) and an anti-crisis coalition headed by Serhiy Tyhipko, who joined the Party of Regions relatively recently and was not from the Donetsk clan; despite being allied with the Party, his “Strong Ukraine” was responsible for political protests in Donetsk in 2010. He later became one of the most vocal critics of the Party of Regions.⁶⁸⁹ Most importantly, the Donetsk clan no longer dominated the government, and there was no prospect of it coming back. The fugitive Yanukovich perhaps was responsible for creating certain expectations that he might still influence politics in Ukraine (Activist from Donetsk interview 27 07 2019). He conducted numerous press conferences in the Russian city of Rostov during this period,⁶⁹⁰ stating that he did not recognise the new government and that he was still the legitimate president.⁶⁹¹ In mid-March, a wave of protests in eastern Ukraine was conducted under the slogan “Yanukovich, come back to work!”.⁶⁹² Serhiy Taruta, the new governor of the Donetsk region, believed that Yanukovich’s Family was funding the pro-Russian protest wave in the region.⁶⁹³ Activist from Donetsk stated in the interview that Yanukovich “had many connections in the region and he was trying to control the processes” (27 07 2019).

⁶⁸⁸ <http://colonelcassad.livejournal.com/2014/02/22/>; <http://archive.is/WRwie>; corroborated https://vk.com/oleg.tsarov?w=wall170184267_77467; <http://archive.is/Vdo8P>.

⁶⁸⁹ “Partiiu regionov pokinuli eshche dva deputata”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 11 April 2014; “Tihipko zaiavill, chto ego vygnali iz “prognivshei” partii regionov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 7 April 2014.

⁶⁹⁰ “V Rostove-na-Donu proshla press-konferentsiia Viktora Yanukovicha”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 February 2014.

⁶⁹¹ “Opozytsiia “pyliae” portfeli”.

⁶⁹² “V Donetske proshel 2-kh tysiachnyi miting za Yanukovicha, potom ushli k Tarute – foto/video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 March 2014.

⁶⁹³ “Taruta: Aktsii separatistov – stsennarii “Sem’i”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 April 2014.

Despite the fact that, as it was reported in the press, Rinat Akhmetov was the first to desert Yanukovych behind closed doors in the Rada,⁶⁹⁴ it is still unclear whether he accepted openly the domination of Bat'kivshchina and other parties formerly in opposition to the Party of Regions, given how turbulent his previous relationship with the Bat'kivshchina network was. Activist from Donetsk told me that "Akhmetov was trying to dissuade Yanukovych from taking the course of action he took" (27 07 2019). The new Cabinet was formed on the basis of a coalition between the remaining Party of Regions' deputies, various offshoots of the party, and the now-dominant opposition parties. It is not clear what proportion of those remaining Party of Regions' deputies belonged to the so-called Akhmetov group. In any case, Akhmetov was not a single actor presenting the Donetsk clan. There were plenty of members of the political elite in Donetsk who had grounds to fear the domination of the rival networks. Activist from Donetsk told me in an interview that "they were very fearful that the new authorities would take revenge on them" (Activist from Donetsk 27 07 2019).

After Yanukovych fled, a member of Bat'kivshchina and a man described as being very loyal to Yanukovych's main rival Yuliya Tymoshenko, Oleksandr Turchynov,⁶⁹⁵ was appointed speaker of the Rada by the majority of votes. It was reported in the official parliamentary newspaper *Holos Ukrainy* that Turchynov was appointed without consultations with the Party of Regions.⁶⁹⁶ In the end, only 28 deputies from the party supported his candidature.⁶⁹⁷ At the same time, the remaining Party of Regions deputies voted almost unanimously for the reinstitution of the 2004 Constitution that granted the Rada supreme power in the country.⁶⁹⁸ The previous constitution gave much more power to the President, such as the power to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

The opposition-dominated Rada followed promptly with overturning the constitutional changes made under Yanukovych. Journalists argued that the opposition parties were "back with a vengeance" against the "dictatorship" of Yanukovych.⁶⁹⁹ This is consistent with Hale's observation that in Ukraine one

⁶⁹⁴ "Opozytsiia "pyliae" portfeli".

⁶⁹⁵ Significantly, Turchynov was described as very loyal to Tymoshenko (see, for example, report "Ukraine's Interim Leader: Number "two" man loyal to Tymoshenko" in *Agence France Presse* 23 February 2014).

⁶⁹⁶ "Verkhovna Rada stala tsentrom kerivnytstva krainy, edinoiu legitymnoiu vladoiu, zakhyshchae i ob'ednuie Skhid i Zakhid, Pivnich i Pivden", *Holos Ukrainy*, 23 February 2014.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ "Opozytsiia "pyliae" portfeli".

network would always seek revenge on the members of rival networks once it secures power (Hale, 2015, 346). Thus, according to the first decisions by the new Rada, the 80 Presidential acts that granted Yanukovych excessive power were to be annulled.⁷⁰⁰ Using its constitutionally-enshrined powers, the Rada appointed the new Prosecutor General and the Head of the Security Service of Ukraine, both opponents of the Party of Regions.⁷⁰¹

Most importantly, the Rada issued laws that aimed to offend the eastern elites and, in the long-term, created perfect grounds for bargaining with the centre for those who operated under the concentrated patronage system in the previous years. It was therefore argued in the press that the people who were empowered by Yanukovych in the regions had no choice but to sabotage these laws.⁷⁰² More specifically, these laws concerned the budget and the use of Russian and regional languages. Firstly, the Rada moved to revise most government programmes concerning the distribution of government funds.⁷⁰³ On 23 February, the Parliament abolished the law “On the Principles of the State Language Policy” adopted on 3 July 2012 (the so-called Kivalov-Kolesnichenko law).⁷⁰⁴ The law granted Russian and other languages spoken by at least 10% of the population in the regions an official status as “regional languages”.⁷⁰⁵ The language law repeal was vetoed by Turchynov on 28 February, with the government promising to adopt a new law on languages, which did not, however, abate the damage it had done.⁷⁰⁶ On the same day, the government issued a statement on seeking \$35 billion from western governments to pay government debts.⁷⁰⁷ From 24 February, the Rada repeatedly stressed that the cooperation with the IMF was its first priority.⁷⁰⁸ Once appointed Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatseniuk stated that Ukraine must comply with the IMF conditions without delay.⁷⁰⁹ The full programme of Yatseniuk’s government included “strict

⁷⁰⁰ “Konstytutsiia 2004 roku povernulasia”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 21 February 2014.

⁷⁰¹ „Pro pryznachennia Mahnic’kogo O.I. upovnovazhenym po kontroliu za diial’nistiu General’noi prokuratury Ukrainy”, *Postanova Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/760-18>

⁷⁰² “Opozytsiia “pyliae” portfeli”.

⁷⁰³ “Opozytsiia “pyliae” portfeli”.

⁷⁰⁴ Named after “Russkoe Edinstvo” activist Vadym Kolesnichenko based in Crimea and jurist Serhyi Kivalov who drafted and submitted the law to the Rada in 2012. For the exhaustive account of the law’s principles and its tumultuous adoption history see Moser 2012.

⁷⁰⁵ “Rada skasuvala movnyi zakon Kolesnichenka”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 23 February 2014.

⁷⁰⁶ “Acting Ukrainian President Turchynov to Veto Language Bill – Presidential Envoy”, *Interfax: Russia & CIS Newswire*, 28 February 2014.

⁷⁰⁷ “Ukraine Seeks Western Aid, as Russia Lashes Out at the New Govt”, *Platts Commodity News*, 24 February 2014.

⁷⁰⁸ “Ukraine Interim President Says Cooperation with IMF to be Government’s Priority”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 25 February 2014.

⁷⁰⁹ “Ukraina dolzhna nemedlenno vypolnit’ usloviia MVM – Yatseniuk”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 February 2014.

economy of the budget funds” (read “reduction of social benefits”) and a “cardinal decrease of all subsidies”.⁷¹⁰

How the main executive body of the country, the Cabinet, was formed also spelled threat to the Party of Regions and specifically, the Donetsk clan. Many of the new ministers were “unknown quantities” for the clan, with whom potentially difficult negotiations had to be conducted. This created higher transaction costs and endangered Donetsk regional elites’ access to resources and capacity to retain power. Therefore, due to their limited learning experience under the domination of one network and as prisoners of a concentrated patronage system, they were in danger. As Journalist 1 told me in an interview, the elites “feared for their money, seats and they wanted to avoid responsibility [for what happened under Yanukovich]” (19 07 2019). As a result, the time-lag between the ouster of the dominant network and the “new deal” between the centre and the elites (that never came to pass however) was crucial. Radical contention in Donetsk region developed precisely during this time lag.

The candidates promoted to the position of Prime Minister came either from the rival network of Bat’kivshchyna or were “opportunistic businessmen”, such as Petro Poroshenko, who had a history of switching to Yushchenko camp fairly quickly, after having been co-opted by the Party of Regions briefly in the early 2000s (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2015, 257). Bat’kivshchyna deputies introduced a novelty – seeking approval of the Cabinet ministers from the Euromaidan People’s Council (Narodnoe Veche) – which was unprecedented.⁷¹¹ Eventually, some Euromaidan activists came to occupy several humanitarian posts and the anti-corruption ministry in the Cabinet.

Thus the Cabinet that came into being on 27 February was heavily dominated by Bat’kivshchyna, included some members of the nationalist Svoboda party, and had no representatives of the Party of Regions.⁷¹² Bat’kivshchyna vied to take the most important positions, such as Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister.⁷¹³ Deputy Minister of regional politics Volodymyr Hroisman, from Vinnitsa, did not belong to

⁷¹⁰ “Programma deiatel’nosti Kabmina Yatseniuka: polnyi tekst”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 February 2014; “Yatseniuk intends to heal Ukraine’s economy with Euro-integration, austerity and monetary stimulus”, *Kyiv Post*, 28 February 2014.

⁷¹¹ “U seredu vlada sprobue “protiahnuty” na Maidani novyi sklad Kabminu”, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 25 February 2014.

⁷¹² “Who’s Who in Ukraine’s “Kamikaze” Cabinet”, Radio Free Europe Documents and Publications, 27 February 2014.

⁷¹³ “Opozytsiia hoche liahty pid oliharkhiv?”, *Ekonomichna Pravda*, 25 February 2014.

any party but supported Yushchenko's Our Ukraine since 2005. In 2014, he promoted decentralisation, which however failed to register with the Donetsk elites who were advancing either federalisation or decentralisation on their own terms. The new Minister of Finance, Oleksandr Shlapak, originated from Lviv, and, despite having criticised Yuliya Tymoshenko's policies while she was Prime Minister, he had more experience working with Yushchenko, Yatseniuk and Kolomoisky than with Yanukovich.⁷¹⁴ He was said to have been connected to Tihypko more than anyone else from the Party of Regions. The Cabinet was thus dominated by the people from western and central regions of Ukraine.

Significant ministerial posts came to be occupied by people from Kharkiv, such as Ihor Shvaika (agriculture minister) and Arsen Avakov, the new Minister of the Interior. Kharkiv therefore maintained its position as a "diffused patronage" region. More importantly, in broad terms, owing to their long-standing conflict with Avakov, Kharkiv's top elites Hennadiy Kernes and Mykhailo Dobkin, could expect appropriate punishments, had they endorsed radical pro-Russian contention in Kharkiv. Donetsk regional elites, by contrast, became even more isolated and insulated from other networks.

Thus, in 2014, Donetsk regional elites confronted something that they never confronted before, even though they were expecting the events to take a course similar to that in 2004- 2005 (Journalist 1 interview 19 07 2019). As both Activist from Donetsk and Journalist 1 revealed to me in the interviews, in 2014, "the situation was extraordinary" for the local elites. It is, therefore, useful to contrast it briefly with the events of the Orange Revolution. In 2004, two factors were present that shaped the perceptions of the local elites: a head-to-head electoral contest and the continuous negotiations between the opposing camps of Yushchenko and Yanukovich. Both allowed the regional elites to coordinate themselves. Significant levels of street and anti-elite violence were absent. More specifically, all the key actors in the 2004 Orange Revolution agreed on a peaceful outcome to the deadlock. As Serhiy Kudelia has demonstrated in several accounts, the main rival of Viktor Yanukovich, Viktor Yushchenko was adamantly against violence: "We decided that this [compromise] was the payment which had to be made so that the confrontation on the streets would not turn into a civil war..." (Kudelia, 2010, 183). Tymoshenko and Turchynov, on the other hand, supported radical action such as the storming of

⁷¹⁴ "Katya Gorchinskaya: the not-so-revolutionary new Ukraine government", *Kyiv Post*, 27 February 2014.

administration buildings (Kudelia, 2010, 181). Thus, when they came to dominate the government in 2014, the local elites in Donetsk had ample grounds to fear retaliation. The “time lag” they needed became even more crucial.

Secondly, in the 2004 confrontation, all parties agreed that a compromise was needed. Yushchenko “agreed to leave the door open for the old guard to reclaim much of its power” (Kudelia, 2010, 161). The deadlock therefore resulted in a “political pact”⁷¹⁵ between the Orange forces and Yanukovich. Kuchma’s constitutional compromise that granted the Prime Minister more power appeared to save the day.⁷¹⁶ This constitutional change meant that the forces represented by Yanukovich could come back. D’Anieri commented on the elite pact in 2004: “[it ensured] the ability of those who are defeated at one point in time to continue to compete, and to have hope of winning in the future” (D’Anieri, 2006, 99). This is exactly what happened in the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections when the Party of Regions won the plurality of votes in the east and was coming back as a major single party in parliament. Therefore, Donetsk elites could rest assured that their interests were still represented in the centre after the Orange Revolution. Below I chart how the elites and pro-federal and pro-Russian activists reacted to the change of the governing network in the centre.

5. Elites in the diffused patronage region adapt to the change of the governing network

After the sudden change of the informal governing network in Kyiv, Kharkiv’s top elites’ behaviour was consistent with the expectations about the behaviour of the local elites in a diffused patronage region. These elites demonstrated great adaptability and flexibility when responding to the change, as they did in the past. They used the time lag between the change of the network and a viable settlement between the region and the centre to defuse the radical pro-federal and pro-Russian protest in the region and to re-coordinate themselves around the new patrons. Thus, in line with the empirical expectation that local elites in diffused patronage regions would not invest in one particular patron even if this patron provided them with significant resources in the past, the city mayor and the Party of Regions’ member Hennadiy Kernes proceeded to denounce Yanukovich in a major interview he gave straight after the ill-fated

⁷¹⁵ Kudelia defines political pact as “a political pact is a set of institutional arrangements guaranteeing that the vital interests of all the parties involved will be honoured” (Kudelia, 2010, 162).

⁷¹⁶ See (Kudelia, 2008).

Congress of the South-Eastern deputies on 22 February. Kernes stated that he recognised the new Rada's authority⁷¹⁷ and the interim presidency of Turchynov.⁷¹⁸ It was in this early interview where he stated that he "did not think of separatism or federalism at all".⁷¹⁹ He would later latch on to this idea staunchly in his negotiations with pro-federalisation activists. In an interview with me, Activist in Kharkiv described Kernes as "very flexible" (16 07 2019).

Despite their aggressive and forbidding stance towards the Euromaidan protest, the Party of Regions' elites signalled their recognition and support of the new government when they allowed the Euromaidan activists to storm and occupy the regional administration building on 23 February. Kharkiv was among very few eastern and southern regions where this took place. According to Dobkin and a Euromaidan activist, the activists were allowed in by Vasil' Homa,⁷²⁰ the deputy chairman of the regional council.⁷²¹ The activists demanded the immediate resignation of both Kernes and Dobkin, but the latter were conciliatory and somewhat soft towards the Euromaidan activists. The protest catalogue I compiled indicates that Kernes came to speak to the Euromaidan protestors no less than seven times. Dobkin later stated that Kernes tried negotiating with the activists but to no avail.⁷²² Unlike in Donetsk, where regional elites began resigning under pressure from radical pro-Russian activists, in Kharkiv, Dobkin and others resigned under pressure from the Euromaidan activists.⁷²³ Dobkin, in particular, decided to run for presidency and, therefore, became largely irrelevant to the "Russian Spring" protest in Kharkiv. This was confirmed to me in an interview with Protest Organiser 2 (Interview 28 09 2018). Dobkin continued to make incendiary statements about federalisation and the need of help from Russia but this was in line with his practice of making bold comments on the politics in Kyiv in the past. Activist in Kharkiv described Dobkin as being much less flexible than Kernes (16 07 2019).

⁷¹⁷ "Kernes rozpoviv, chomu litav do Zhenevy ta pro stosunky z Yanukovychem", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 23 February 2014.

⁷¹⁸ "Na Turchynova poklaly obov'yazky Prezydenta Ukrainy", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 23 February 2014.

⁷¹⁹ "Gepa" vernulsia v Ukrainu i hochet stat' "drugom" Maidana", *Censor.net*, 23 February 2014.

⁷²⁰ "Dobkin: "My sdelaem vse vozmozhnoe, chtoby eta segodniashniaia vlast' dolgo ne proderzhalas'", *057*, 1 March 2014.

⁷²¹ "Novyi Kabmin i otstavka Dobkina. Chego zhe hotiat zakhvatchiki HOGA i pochemu oni ne raskhodiatsia? Opros", *057*, 28 February 2014.

⁷²² "Dobkin: My sdelaem vse vozmozhnoe, chtoby eta segodniashniaia vlast' dolgo ne proderzhalas" (polnoe interv'iu)", *057*, 1 March 2014.

⁷²³ "Dobkin podal v otstavku", *LB.UA*, 26 February 2014.

Congruent with the expectation that a diffused patronage region would benefit from multiple patrons' rise to the centre, Kharkiv's top elites from the Party of Regions did not oppose the elevation of several Kharkivites to important government positions. The Party of Regions-dominated city council, together with Kernes, recognised the new Minister of the Interior, and Kernes' long-time adversary, Arsen Avakov, and Ihor Shvaika, the head of the local Svoboda party, who became the new minister of agrarian policy.⁷²⁴ Kernes did not oppose the appointment of both.⁷²⁵ In fact, throughout the "Russian Spring" protest wave, none of the Party of Regions' members in Kharkiv seem to have resisted the key changes made in the local cadres, even if these changes meant having to co-exist with their political adversaries. On 26 February, general-mayor of the local police Oleh Demchenko was dismissed, and in his place Anatoliy Dmitriev, a member of Bat'kivshchina, was appointed. The regional prosecutor was dismissed on the same day.⁷²⁶ In the major reshuffle that took place across the entire east, Ihor Baluta, a member of Bat'kivshchina and a Euromaidan coordinator, was appointed the regional governor on 2 March.⁷²⁷ On 4 April, Baluta appointed Ivan Varchenko, a local Batkivschina deputy, as his deputy governor.⁷²⁸ In effect, the power balance between the Party of Regions and Bat'kivshchina in the regional politics shifted back to what it was when Avakov was governor.

6. Elites in the diffused patronage region remove the radical streak from the pro-federal protest

Whilst adapting to the change of the informal governing network in the centre, the elites in the diffused patronage city of Kharkiv systematically opposed the radical streak of the Anti-Maidan protest as it threatened their positions in the local government and their relationship with the now-dominant governing network. According to two of my interviewees who participated in the pro-federalisation protest, Kernes and other members of the local elites sought to remain "in control of the city" and "to keep their seats" in the local government (Interview, participant 23 09 2018). According to Protest

⁷²⁴ "Rada ukhvalyla novyii Uriad. Sered ministriv dva kharkiv'ianina", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 27 February 2014.

⁷²⁵ "Kernes: "Davaite poterpim i dadim vremia novoi vlasti realizovat' svoi polnomochiia, idei i vypolnit' vziatye na sebia obyazatel'stva", *057*, 28 February 2014.

⁷²⁶ "Zvil'нено holovnogo militsionera Kharkivshchiny Demchenka", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 26 February 2014.

⁷²⁷ "Hubernatorom Kharkivs'koii oblasti stav Ihor Baluta", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 2 March 2014; "Dobkin uvolen. Na ego meste nardep ot "Bat'kivshchiny", *057*, 2 March 2014.

⁷²⁸ "Ivan Varchenko budet zamestitilem gubernatora Igoria Baluty", *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 4 March 2014.

Organiser 1 (Interview 29 09 2018), Kernes' first task was to maintain order in the city and "to make sure there were no killings and fires". Another interviewee was convinced that Kernes wanted peace in Kharkiv – "he did the right thing" (Interview 2 participant, 23 09 2018). One of my interviewees stated that Kernes could have been "easily removed" or even "killed," had he been more resistant to the changes in government (Interview, Participant 23 09 2018). This was confirmed in an interview with Protest Organiser 2 (28 09 2018).

Both Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2 maintained that Kernes attempted to reconcile Euromaidan and pro-federalisation protestors. Activist in Kharkiv described Kernes' attempts "to be a peacemaker between the opposing camps" (16 07 2019). However, Kernes did not approve radical pro-Russian protest. "Kernes tried to head the protest", Protest Organiser 2 said, "his people appeared on the Freedom Square on 23 February; they began giving us material help but they were taking down the Russian flags and [our] Velikaya Rus' flags" (Interview 28 09 2018).⁷²⁹ During the Anti-Maidan meeting on 23 February, Kernes and Dobkin addressed the Anti-Maidan protestors from the stage and asked them to dismantle the barricades they built around the Lenin monument.⁷³⁰ Another notable event was the attempt to hoist the Russian flag on the building of the city council on 26 February. On that day, during a pro-Russian rally where people presented with St George ribbons and chanted "Russia", a pro-Russian activist hoisted the flag of Russia on the building of the city council.⁷³¹ Kernes tried to remove the flag, urging the protestors not to follow the "Crimean scenario".⁷³² It can be seen on the video that Kernes nearly fought with the crowd in rage.⁷³³ Similarly, the Lenin Monument defence movement was abandoned by Kernes on 4 March, for unknown reasons. According to a report, Kernes told Lenin monument defence activists to leave the Square and threatened them with 7 to 15 years of imprisonment for enticement of separatism.⁷³⁴ This is corroborated in Serhiy Yudaev's chronicle: "Then I saw our

⁷²⁹ Also confirmed here <https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=400&own=1> ; <http://archive.is/UgXNW>

⁷³⁰ "Massovoe stolknovenie v tsentre Khar'kova: antimaïdan protiv Maidana", 057, 23 February 2014.

⁷³¹ "Tysiachnaia tolpa ne daet Kernesu sniat' rossiiskii flag so zdaniia gorsoвета. Mer zaiavliaet, chto eto provokatsiia", 057, 26 February 2014.

⁷³² "Kharkiv mayor fails to remove Russian flag raised by Lenin supporters outside city council", *Interfax: Ukrainian General Newswire*, 26 February 2014.

⁷³³ "Pravookhorontsi rozberut'sia z mitingom bilia mis'krady – Kernes", *Slobids'kii Kraii*, 26 February 2014.

⁷³⁴ "Miting pod pamiatnikom Leninu v Khar'kove svernulsia: aktivistov obvinili v separatizme i prigozili dat' 7 let tiur'my", 057, 4 March 2014.

“leaders”, who were shouting the day before “Kernes is a traitor, Kernes has stopped resisting and become the junta’s (the new government in Kyiv) servant,” listening to this same Kernes and dismantling the tents, following his orders” (Yudaev, 2015, 16). The appeals to Russia for help then gradually disappeared during the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation meetings in the period between 23 February to 6 April. The Activist in Kharkiv attributed this to the “good work” of the Minister of the Interior Arsen Avakov and his “conversations” with Kernes (Interview 16 07 2019). This again highlights the diffused nature of the regional patronage, as Avakov was a Kharkivite who rose to the position of power in the centre in 2014.

The events of 1 March similarly showed that the local elites tried controlling the radical Anti-Maidan and pro-federal forces. By 1 March, Kharkiv regional administration building (HOGA) remained occupied by the Euromaidan activists for nearly a week and no attempts at evicting them had been made. According to Vasil’ Homa, the activists did not clear the building despite having negotiated to do so with the local Bat’kivshchina, Udar and Svoboda parties. There is also some evidence that the local elites could not coerce the police to clear the regional administration building of the Euromaidan activists. On 3 March, Kernes stated in an interview that the city police force “extricated themselves” from the events and played the game of wait and see.⁷³⁵ During 1 March meeting, Kernes addressed the people from the stage saying that the police was demoralised and therefore incapable of performing its duties.⁷³⁶

As such, the pro-federalisation forces were used by the local elites to clear the building of the Euromaidan protestors. On 1 March Kernes organised a meeting to defend the Lenin monument and to show that Kharkiv stood undivided.⁷³⁷ The meeting quickly gathered around 20 thousand people and seemingly began slipping out of control. People were chanting slogans such as “Russia Help us!” which contradicted the spirit of the meeting. One of the leaders of Kharkiv’s branch of the Communist Party, Alla Aleksandrovskaya, stated from the stage that only federalisation would help preserve Ukraine. Kernes

⁷³⁵ “Kernes schitaet liudei, razgornivshikh zdanie HOGA i ustroivshikh samosud nad evromaidanovtsami “mirnymi khar’kovchanami”, 057, 4 March 2014.

⁷³⁶ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=260&q=%D0%9A%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%81&w=wall-25354839_7783;http://archive.is/zocua

⁷³⁷ “Mnogotysiachnaia tolpa na ploshchadi Svobody: khar’kovchane vyshli na miting Kernes”, 057, 1 March 2014.

contradicted her and asked her not to repeat such statements again.⁷³⁸ In his speeches at the meeting, he maintained that Kharkiv remained an inseparable part of Ukraine and that no separatism would be allowed in the region.⁷³⁹

The episode that followed, when Kernes allowed one of the most radical leaders of the Anti-Maidan and pro-federalisation protest, Yehor Lohinov, to speak on the stage, can be interpreted as an attempt to determine the “weak links” in the movement and demonstrate to Kharkivites that Kernes was in control of the city. Yudaev later claimed that Lohinov was “Kernes’ creation” (Yudaev, 2015, 4, 20; Yudaev misspells Lohinov’s name as “Logvinov”). Both Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2 described Lohinov as “a man from the grassroots” to me, but they were silent as to whether Lohinov was an informer or a double agent. Lohinov was later imprisoned during the eviction of the pro-federalisation protestors from the HOGA building on 8 April.⁷⁴⁰ As such, during 1 March meeting, Lohinov read out the address written by the members of Kharkiv self-defence forces. “Keep Kernes in his office until the next elections”, the address run, “create the Kharkiv *veche* (council) consisting of five people and make it the main ruling body in the region; the *veche* must sustain the relationship between the regions in Ukraine and the neighbouring regions of Russia; continue forming self-defence units; force the law enforcement agents, i.e. the police, to join the self-defence units or else they must resign; further steps as to the status of the region must be decided only by the population of the region; Berkut must defend the city; stop financing the Kyiv treasury; forbid the signing of any agreements with the EU until the referendum is held.”⁷⁴¹

The statement contradicted the spirit of the meeting which is evident from Kernes’ reaction to it. Again, as an elite member functioning in a diffused patronage region, Kernes demonstrated his knowledge of the law. Despite having allowed Lohinov onto the stage, Kernes went on to counter-argue him and reminded those who wanted to destabilise the situation – he probably meant Lohinov and other pro-federalisation activists – that the elections would be held strictly in accordance with the law. He drew

⁷³⁸ “Rossiia – SOS” ili vsego dva ukrainskikh flaga na mnogotysiachnuii tolpu: chto proishodit na ploshchadi Svobody”, 057, 1 March 2014.

⁷³⁹ “Miting. Ploshchad’ Svobody 01.03.2014”, *YouTube*, 1 March 2014
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yrtvcnjcdvg>.

⁷⁴⁰ <https://atn.ua/politika/kto-stoyal-za-hnr-otkroveniia-hronikera-antimaydana>; <http://archive.is/psAsW>.

⁷⁴¹ “V Khar’kove idet mnogotysiachnyi miting Antimaidana (dopolniaetsia)”, *Nabnews*, 1 March 2014.

the attention to the fact that all local administrative bodies were working in accordance with the law, thus questioning Lohinov's statement of people's power. Kernes also reminded the activists that he would not resign. He pledged that they defend the city together within some legal parameters and reminded the hot-headed activists in the crowd that whoever wanted to aggravate the situation would be rebuffed "within 20 minutes". He somewhat reluctantly endorsed the self-defence units but then retorted to another speaker who offered to create other self-defence units and ask the fight club Oplot for help: "There is no need to create anarchy... Why are you asking us to fight?".⁷⁴² After this meeting, Kernes stated in an interview: "if we are law-abiding citizens and do not let our emotions overwhelm us, we will not allow our meetings to become a coup for the benefit of Russia".⁷⁴³

The sudden closure of the fight club Oplot and disappearance of its leader Yevhen Zhilin in early March are also good examples of how the political opportunities for radical Anti-Maidan activism were closed in Kharkiv. According to one of my interviewees who participated in the pro-federal protest, Oplot and Zhilin, in particular, were "a formidable force," willing to and capable of confronting the new government violently (Interview, Participant 28 09 2018). My interviewee claimed that Zhilin urged him and others to form militarised units to resist the Kyiv government. This, however, never came to pass. In a widely-quoted interview in February 2014, Zhilin claimed to have gone to St Petersburg to "seek help".⁷⁴⁴ Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2 stated that the members of Oplot had ties with the criminal world and presented danger. Protest Organiser 1 said that many went to fight in the Donbas later (Interview, 29 09 2018). According to one of my interviewees, Oplot fighters "wanted to be with Russia" (Interview, participant, 28 09 2018). On 1 March, Oplot published a statement requiring a referendum on either "autonomy" or "unity with Russia". "Due to the irreconcilable differences between the west and east of Ukraine (their heroes, their history, and their values, in particular)", the statement read, "we need a referendum to help people express their views". "Among the questions considered by such a referendum," it continued, "should be the status of the Russian language, the status of the region (for it to remain within a unitary Ukraine, to become a federalised unit with its own budget and constitution, to be

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ "Gennadii Kernes: my zhivem i rabotaem po zakonam Ukrainy", *Khar'kovskie Izvestiia*, 3 March 2014.

⁷⁴⁴ "Ukrainian TV warns "semi-legal armies" being set up in east, west of country", *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 10 February 2014.

an autonomous state, or unite with Russia), the status of the Red Army veterans, and the status of the OUN-UPA fighters”. The request was to be filed with the regional administration.⁷⁴⁵ These radical views did not agree with the local elites, and therefore Oplot and Zhilin had to be reined in.

Following Zhilin’s fiery speech urging the local elites to provide weapons for self-defence against the Right Sector at the Congress of All Deputies on 22 February, the acting Minister of the Interior Arsen Avakov claimed to have opened criminal proceedings against Zhilin and Oplot.⁷⁴⁶ Zhilin was forced to leave for Russia.⁷⁴⁷ On 25 February, Oplot office in Kharkiv had to evacuate itself. According to eye witnesses and journalists, furniture and computers were being taken out from the building for several hours, while Zhilin did not answer his mobile phone and his co-workers left the office.⁷⁴⁸ On 1 March, Ukrainian nationalists stormed and occupied the building. This is corroborated by the posts on Oplot’s Vkontakte pages, which announced the closure of the club.⁷⁴⁹ This was confirmed by one of my interviewees. He also claimed that when the Right Sector arrived to Kharkiv around 1 March, their aim was to “get rid of Zhilin” rather than simply vandalise the Oplot office (Interview, participant, 28 09 2018). Activist in Kharkiv stated in an interview with me that his men arrived to the aerodrome where one of the meetings of Oplot was supposed to be held but “there was no one there” (16 07 2019).

In line with the expectation that the elites in a diffused patronage region would use their knowledge of the law in an attempt to rein in the radical forces in the pro-federalisation movement, the local elites refused to budge on the activists’ key demand – the federalisation referendum (Protest Organiser 1, interview 24 09 2018). This was important because in Donetsk, the elites signalled their readiness to conduct such a referendum throughout the period, beginning on 1 March. By contrast, Kernes adopted a tough stance towards the referendum demand and refused to budge on this issue. In an interview on 4 March, he stated: “I am not going to comply with any ultimatums and blackmailing, I am not going to gather any sessions, announce the referendum and the rest. Please do not drag me into this. I know what the current law says and will only work within its remit”. He also said “Kharkiv is for united Ukraine and Kharkiv

⁷⁴⁵ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/3784485.html> ; <http://archive.is/unar3>.

⁷⁴⁶ “Yanukovicha i Ko ob’iavili v rozysk, a za liderom “Oplota” v Khar’kov uzhe edut operativniki”, 057, 24 February 2014.

⁷⁴⁷ “UPtrapryve radikaly zakhvatili zdanie kluba “Oplot””, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 1 March 2014.

⁷⁴⁸ “V Khar’kove razbegaetsia zhilinskii “Oplot””, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 25 February 2014.

⁷⁴⁹ https://vk.com/wall-17147496?day=25022014&w=wall-17147496_4339%2Fall ; <http://archive.is/DPN8c>

will always be in Ukraine”.⁷⁵⁰ Kernes maintained this stance during a pro-federalisation meeting on 15 March.⁷⁵¹

Unlike in Donetsk where the elites embraced the referendum and even began preparing for it, in Kharkiv, on 12 March, Kharkiv city council lodged an appeal with the local judiciary to limit the rights of citizens to hold mass meetings in the coming weekend.⁷⁵² This was done on Kernes’ instruction.⁷⁵³ “I have instructed the Kharkiv City Council to ask the administrative court to ban the referendum. It is illegal,” Kernes told reporters before a court session at the Pecherskiy District Court in Kyiv. Kharkiv’s district administrative court eventually banned the holding of the referendum. Regional Council Chairman Serhiy Chernov confirmed this: “A number of NGOs appealed to the Regional Council with a memorandum which requires the convening of an extraordinary session to set a local referendum on the federal structure and the state language. However, these issues could be addressed only by a nationwide referendum, which, in accordance with Article 72 of the Constitution of Ukraine, can be set exclusively by the Verkhovna Rada or the President of Ukraine”.⁷⁵⁴ “The deputy corps of the Kharkiv Regional Council cannot put the issues onto the agenda of the session and take decisions which are contrary to the law. The issue of the country’s federal structure requires a serious preparatory work of legal experts and the widest public discussion,” Chernov added. Additionally, in accordance with Article 72 of the Ukrainian Constitution, the all-Ukrainian referendum must be held on request of no fewer than 3 million citizens of Ukraine eligible to vote, on the condition that signatures for such a referendum are collected in no fewer than two-thirds of regions, with at least one hundred thousand signatures from each region”.⁷⁵⁵

Not only that, the judge sent letters to the activists to appear before the court.⁷⁵⁶ The SBU launched criminal proceedings against the organizers of the referendum over the encroachment on the territorial

⁷⁵⁰ “Mer Khar’kova kategoricheski otkazal’sia provodit’ referendum po federalizatsii Ukrainy”, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 4 March 2014.

⁷⁵¹ It is notable that the protestors never attacked Kernes or other members of the local elites as they attacked governor Shyshatskiy in Donetsk. The most protestors did was to throw a bottle of an antiseptic brilliant green at Kernes during the meeting on 15 March.

⁷⁵² “U Kernesha khotiat cherez sud zapretit’ separatistam sobirat’sia na ploshchadi”, *057*, 13 March 2014.

⁷⁵³ “Stoit li idti na segodniashnii referendum v Khar’kove? Zaiavlenie gorodskikh vlastei, SBU i prokuratury”, *057*, 16 March 2014.

⁷⁵⁴ Kharkiv regional council refuses to hold referendum on federalization”, *Ukrainian National News Agency*, 13 March 2014

⁷⁵⁵ <http://www.mediaport.ua/Borot'ba-za-yugo-vostok-kto-skolko-zachem>

⁷⁵⁶ “Na ploshchadi Svobody prorossiiskie aktivisty provodiat “referendum””, *057*, 16 March 2014.

integrity and inviolability of Ukraine's borders.⁷⁵⁷ The court, the mayor, the prosecutor and the regional council thus acted in concert. They were swift in targeting the activists and acted quickly. This became their mainstay tactic applied to the later protests. It is notable that no protests were banned in a similar way in Donetsk during this period.

Despite the prohibition, the activists still went ahead with the referendum meeting, and it was held on 16 March, on the square full of people.⁷⁵⁸ People were given bulletins with the heading “On economic federalisation and self-rule of Kharkiv and Kharkiv region”. Three questions were asked: for or against economic federalisation, people’s power and language sovereignty (meaning the status of the Russian language as the second state language). The activists planned to ask Russia to “announce the results of the referendum to the whole world”, “in the absence of a legitimate government that would do so”.⁷⁵⁹

Following this, the activists picketed the Russian consulate asking for Russian peacekeeping forces to “defend the rights of Russian citizens in Kharkiv”.⁷⁶⁰ Lohinov in an interview prior to the meeting stated: “[I think] we will have to take the reins of power into our own hands. We will say that all law enforcement agencies, all military structures and all administrative structures of the city and the region must immediately swear allegiance to the executive committee (the executive committee of the pro-federalisation movement “Veche Kharkov”). We will use all available means to achieve this. We will ask the Veche to support us in our appeal to Russia for help”. Lohinov also stated that it was planned to elect a people’s mayor at the meeting. Another member of the executive committee “Veche Kharkov” Hennadiy Makarov stated that the pro-federalisation activists would ask the Russian President Putin to bring the Russian army into all regions of the left-bank Ukraine.⁷⁶¹

It is plausible to argue that the prohibited referendum-veche took place because Kernes was arrested on 13 March, summoned to Kyiv, and therefore unable to control the protest. His arrest was in relation to

⁷⁵⁷ Court in Ukraine's Kharkiv bans federalization referendum”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 15 March 2014.

⁷⁵⁸ “V Khar’kove provedut narodnyi veche-referendum”, *Nabnews*, 12 March 2014.

⁷⁵⁹ “Na ploshchadi Svobody prorossiiskie aktivisty provodiat “referendum””.

⁷⁶⁰ “Poklonniki “bratskoi derzhavy” trebuiut vvedeniia rossiiskikh voisk v Khar’kov”, *057*, 16 March 2014.

⁷⁶¹ “Rossiiskie natsionalitsy obeshchaiut vziat’ pod kontrol’ko Khar’kov 16 marta”, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 13 March 2014.

the attacks and death threats directed at the two Euromaidan protestors on 25 and 26 January.⁷⁶² In an interview he gave straight after his arrest, Kernes maintained that his arrest was a political revenge by Avakov and that the charges were entirely fabricated.⁷⁶³ It is unclear whether the charges levelled against Kernes were true, despite the testimonies made by the Euromaidan activists.⁷⁶⁴ On 13 March, Pechersk district judge put Kernes under home arrest. He was not divested of his rank and could fulfil his mayoral duties while under the arrest.⁷⁶⁵

Finally, the work of the local security service agents was important in neutralising the radical streak in the pro-federalisation protest. In Kharkiv, despite being in confrontation with the Security Service of Ukraine over the previous decade, the local elites did not oppose the methodical work of the SBU. Being higher up in the hierarchy of the law enforcement agencies, the SBU was not supposed to target the activists at all, according to one of my interviewees (Interview, participant 28 09 2018). It is worth noting that it was the SBU rather than the police that targeted the activists. In Donetsk, by contrast, according to Activist in Kharkiv, both the SBU and the police were “completely hopeless”. “These were Potemkin’s Villages that they constructed [when they detained the radicals],” he said (Interview, 16 07 2019).

In both regions, there was a general paralysis of and confusion among the police force after the Euromaidan. One of my interviewees stated that there were “internal rifts” within the police force as to whom to support (Interview, participant 28 09 2018). According to Activist in Kharkiv, the police were completely hopeless in Kharkiv (Interview, 16 07 2019). A Kharkiv Euromaidan activist Oleksandr Shevchenko claimed that many policemen did not know what to do after the flight of Yanukovych. “Many policemen help us”, he stated, “But a lot of them are unable to work; they simply wait and see”.⁷⁶⁶ On 22 February, Svoboda deputy Ihor Shvaika informed the journalists that 247 policemen patrolling the city wanted to join the Euromaidan⁷⁶⁷. Around 1 March, in one of his interviews, Kernes claimed that

⁷⁶²“Stali izvesny podrobnosti pohishcheniia i izbieniia Gepoi khar’kovchan. Okhrana mera ugrozhala ubiistvom”, *Censor.net*, 14 March 2014.

⁷⁶³ “Mest’ Avakova? Kernes: menia obviniaiut v pytkakh, pohishchenii i ugroze ubiistva (polnoe interv’iu)”, 057, 11 March 2014.

⁷⁶⁴ “Stali izvesny podrobnosti pohishcheniia i izbieniia Gepoi khar’kovchan”.

⁷⁶⁵ “Kernes boretsia s separatistami dazhe pod domashnim arestom”, 057, 22 March 2014.

⁷⁶⁶ “Khar’kovskaia militsiia ne znaet, kak vesti sebia dal’she”, 057, 23 February 2014.

⁷⁶⁷ “Pochti 250 khar’kovskikh militsionerov perekhodiat na storonu Maidana – Shvaika”, *Censor.net*, 22 February 2014.

more than a thousand policemen across the region began resigning.⁷⁶⁸ This inability to work effectively was explained by the fact that the police did not know how to react to protestors, especially after the violent behaviour of their Berkut colleagues during the Euromaidan. Were they too lenient towards the protestors, they would have been punished by their superiors. Were they too violent, they would have become victims of reciprocal violence. On the other hand, according to my interview with Protest Organiser 1, almost the entire police force in Kharkiv was “on the side of [the pro-federalisation] protestors” (Interview 24 09 2018). He stated in the interview that the police did everything to make sure there was as little bloodshed as possible (Interview 29 09 2018). They even spoke to protestors and organisers themselves asking what could be done to prevent bloodshed.

As a result of the general paralysis of the local police, the local branches of the SBU began targeting pro-federalisation protestors. According to Protest Organiser 1 and one of my other interviewees, the more methodical work of the SBU in the region in the period before 6 April prevented the local protest from degenerating into an internal war. Apukhtin in one of his interviews said that the SBU often invited him for interrogations and they said they were not going to give up the city.⁷⁶⁹

The SBU began targeting the activists systematically from the first pro-federalisation meeting on 1 March. Following the meeting, it opened the criminal proceedings in accordance with the Part 1 Article 294 (mass disturbances) of the Penal Code, which carried the punishment of 10 years of imprisonment.⁷⁷⁰ One of the members of Apukhtin’s Grazhdanskiy Forum commented on these events, with a deeply felt grievance at injustice: “On 1 March, during the clearing of HOGA... the attackers (that is the Anti-Maidan activists) handed over the Euromaidan activists to the MVD (the Ministry of the Interior) together with their equipment (automatic guns, Molotov cocktails etc.). The next day all the detained [Euromaidan activists] were freed and could walk freely in Kharkiv. On 8 March... our men and Cossacks who stormed the HOGA received notices to come to the police who held them responsible for mass disturbances”.⁷⁷¹ This is confirmed in one of the newspaper reports where it says that the activists of pro-

⁷⁶⁸ “Khar’kovskie militsionery nachali massovo podavat’ v otstavku”, *Khar’kovskie Izvestiia*, 1 March 2014.

⁷⁶⁹ “Politzaklyuchennyi Yuriy Apukhtin (Khar’kov). O sobytiakh vesny 2014 v Khar’kove”, *YouTube*, 29 March 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVKE57sLp0>

⁷⁷⁰ “Po faktu massovykh besporiadkov v Khar’kove nachalos’ ugovnoe proizvodstvo”, *057*, 1 March 2014.

⁷⁷¹ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=840&own=1&w=wall-67607008_9; <http://archive.is/bME90>

federal movements in Kharkiv informed the press that they had begun receiving similar notices to come to the SBU for investigation. These were connected to the events on 1 March.⁷⁷² On 14 March, the SBU opened criminal proceedings against the pro-federalisation activists on the grounds of their separatist announcements, such as public calls to change the territorial order of Ukraine.⁷⁷³ The SBU informed that 22 people had already been investigated and 7 had been detained.⁷⁷⁴

After 16 March “referendum meeting”, the SBU became heavily involved in seeking out and opening criminal proceedings against pro-federalisation activists on the grounds of encroachment on the territory of Ukraine. On 20 March, Ihor Massalov, one of the protest organisers, was summoned to the SBU.⁷⁷⁵ He was allegedly a witness in a case encouraging separatism.⁷⁷⁶ On 24 March, the activist of one of the key pro-federal movements, Borot’ba, Denys Zaitsev was convicted of an administrative offence after filing a notification for a meeting with the local council. Zaitsev was convicted of holding a meeting prohibited by the district judge. One of Borot’ba leaders Serhiy Kirichuk was also convicted of the administrative offence. Zaitsev stated that he was unaware of the court’s decision.⁷⁷⁷ Kirichuk⁷⁷⁸ and Sut’ Vremeni activists claimed to have been receiving threats on their phones.⁷⁷⁹ By 29 March, one of the more radical activists Ihnat Kramskoi (nickname “Topaz”) was arrested on the charges of organisation and participation in mass disturbances using dangerous objects (Part 1 Article 241 of the Penal Code, with the maximum punishment of 8 years imprisonment). This was in relation to the events of 1 March when the HOGA was stormed by pro-federalisation activists.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷² “Prorossiiskie aktivisty v Khar’kove zaiavliaiut o presledovaniakh”, *Nabnews*, 7 March 2014.

⁷⁷³ “SBU nachala rassledovanie pryzyvov khar’kovskikh separtistov”, *Censor.net*, 14 March 2014.

⁷⁷⁴ <https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=840&own=1>

⁷⁷⁵ “V Khar’kove vyzvan na dopros “narodnyi gubernator” Ihor Massalov”, *Nabnews*, 20 March 2014.

⁷⁷⁶ “Odnogo iz organizatorov prorossiiskikh mitingov v Khar’kove priglasili priiti v SBU dlia dachi pokazanii”, *057*, 22 March 2014.

⁷⁷⁷ <https://borot’ba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/03/25/>; <http://archive.is/oEy1j>.

⁷⁷⁸ <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/03/13/>; <http://archive.is/IkEqR>.

⁷⁷⁹ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=600&q=%D1%83%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B7%D1%8B&w=wall-25354839_8664; <http://archive.is/JA2ob>;

⁷⁸⁰ “Leninskii sud izbral meru presecheniia dlia “Topaza””, *057*, 29 March 2014.

7. Moderate protest emerges in response to the elites' actions

7.1. Relatively weak challengers

As outlined in the theory chapter, political opportunities for protest can be used even by challengers who are relatively weak and have little experience in organising protests. Kharkiv's pro-federal and pro-Russian challengers fall into this category. There were numerous pro-federal and pro-Russian groups prior to the onset of the "Russian Spring" in Kharkiv. Very few of these groups participated in any collective action, such as protest or picketing (as listed by Tarrow (Tarrow, 1998, 110)). None of my interviewees confirmed that the pro-Russian groups specifically organised any direct collective action on a major scale prior to 2014. According to Protest Organiser 1, "There were no serious protests in Kharkiv [against the language policies]", but there were many conferences and forums" (Interview 29 09 2018).

Many people who later became pro-federal and pro-Russian protest organisers in 2014 were information warriors, publishing on the Internet and distributing printed copies of pamphlets. User Mikle1 was a somewhat typical information warrior who published extensively on his blog on a variety of topics, such as Ukrainian history and current affairs.⁷⁸¹ At the same time, he did not seem to have organised or participated in an offline direct collective action, such as protest or picketing. Protest Organiser 2 confirmed in the interview that both he and Protest Organiser 1 organised televised debates, conferences, and annual marches on various dates, such as the Victory Day and May Day (28 09 2018). They did not engage in a collective action on the scale of that in 2014. He said in the interview that the only major collective action he participated in was an anti-LGBT march in Kyiv in summer 2013, where he confronted the police for the first time: this "was the only mass protest I can remember"; "it demonstrated to me how the current government cooperated with the nationalists, who were allowed to throw smoke bombs into the crowd while being cordoned off by the police."

Other notable Kharkiv-based pro-Russian groups, such as Sut' Vremeni (the Essence of Time), had more extensive coverage on social media, but did not engage in any collective action, such as protest or picketing, in the years prior to 2014. Paradoxically, most of the meetings they covered on social media

⁷⁸¹ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/2009/04/>; <http://archive.is/pilcd>.

were in Russia,⁷⁸² apart from the regular Victory Day and Labour Day (1st of May) meetings held in Kharkiv.⁷⁸³ Sut' Vremeni participated in the Anti-Maidan meetings from their start, such as a joint one on 16 December 2013, when they made one of the very first appeals to the ethnic patron Russia, pledging it to “see in the protestors adherents of the Russian World”.⁷⁸⁴

The leaders of the Russian Spring, such as Protest Organiser 1, had more experience in organising political action and were “known to the people”, according to Protest Organiser 2 (interview 28 09 2018). This is why, according to Protest Organiser 2, Protest Organiser 1 emerged at the helm of pro-federalisation resistance in Kharkiv in 2014. In the interview, Protest Organiser 1 stated that he was in Kharkiv politics since the mid-1990s, when he was a deputy in the regional council. He confirmed to me that he did not organise protests and pickets on the scale of 2014 (Interview 24 09 2018).

The only anti-Maidan that seems to have had sufficient resources⁷⁸⁵ and experience in political activism in Kharkiv was a Marxist, anti-oligarchic, anti-nationalist⁷⁸⁶ “Borot’ba” (“Fight”). In fact, according to one of my interviewees, Borot’ba had significant resources and “well-educated people” who could lead the crowds; for example, Borot’ba had sound amplifiers, according to the same interviewee (Interview, participant, 28 08 2018). Both Protest Organiser 1 and Protest Organiser 2 confirmed to me that the organisation was well financed from Europe.

Borot’ba engaged in collective action such as picketing from its incipience in 2011.⁷⁸⁷ The years 2012 and 2013 were punctuated by a series of collective actions conducted by Borotba, such as an all-Ukrainian anti-capitalist protest in Kharkiv in defence of trade unions and against the new labour code on 21 May 2012,⁷⁸⁸ and anti-UPA meetings and demonstrations in October 2012.⁷⁸⁹ In summer 2012, Borot’ba organised a joint meeting with the Green Party to defend the Gorky Park.⁷⁹⁰ They had experience in

⁷⁸² https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=28500&own=1&w=wall-25354839_89; <http://archive.is/iw4KM>.

⁷⁸³ <https://vk.com/wall-25354839?day=01052012>; <http://archive.is/0P9Bb>.

⁷⁸⁴ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?day=16122013&w=wall-25354839_3059%2Fall; <https://archive.is/MFoOX>.

⁷⁸⁵ “Politzaklyuchennyi Yuriy Apukhtin”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVKE57sLp0>

⁷⁸⁶ <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/04/15/>; <https://archive.is/2pUw4>

⁷⁸⁷ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=1240&w=wall-38967458_8%2Fall; <http://archive.is/5LTd0>

⁷⁸⁸ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=1240&w=wall-38967458_18%2Fall; <http://archive.is/mst06>

⁷⁸⁹ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=1100&w=wall-38967458_193%2Fall; <http://archive.is/l9KkK>

⁷⁹⁰ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=1180&z=video26336280_163645009%2Fa00122316b49784316%2Fpl_post_-38967458_81; <http://archive.is/oY0it>

uniting various leftist currents in their protests, such as in January 2013, when they used the resources of other organisations to support trade unions of a mine “Red partisan”. They picketed the office of DTEK who managed the mine.⁷⁹¹ In January of the same year, they successfully united with other organisations to “fight fascism and capitalism”.⁷⁹² They had experience in picketing the city council, such as on 3 June 2013, when they, together with the old stalwart “Labour Kharkiv” (Trudovaya Kharkivshchina) and other organisations, picketed the city council to demand to lower the prices on the city transport.⁷⁹³ However, judging by photographs and video footage, these meetings were poorly attended.⁷⁹⁴ Borot’ba was also institutionalised: their candidates participated in the local elections in 2012.⁷⁹⁵

With the beginning of the Euromaidan, Borot’ba began participating in the Anti-Maidan meetings where, like their pro-federal counterparts, they adopted an anti-EU position. To Borot’ba activists, the integration with Europe might have led to catastrophic social consequences, including unemployment. Additionally, they were against the integration with Europe on ideological grounds, as to them, the integration was promoted by a group of rich Ukrainian families with assets in metallurgy.⁷⁹⁶ Borot’ba was anti-Russian, which provoked consternation among their fellow protestors. During an Anti-Maidan meeting on 26 November 2013, one of Borot’ba leaders Serhiy Kirichuk criticised Ukraine’s bid to integrate into the EU and the Customs Union, calling the latter “a neoliberal institution like the EU”.⁷⁹⁷

7.2. Moderate pro-federal protest in Kharkiv

As one of the protest organisers revealed to me, there was always a possibility of an armed conflict in Kharkiv (Protest Organiser 1, interview 24 09 2018). However, the type of protest that emerged in Kharkiv was moderate. Here I demonstrate that this type of protest emerged in response to the actions of the local elites. I also offer alternative explanations of why this type of protest emerged in the city, which I discussed with the protest organisers and participants. I discuss these alternative explanations first.

⁷⁹¹ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=980&w=wall-38967458_346%2Fall; <http://archive.is/Ashp6>

⁷⁹² https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=960&w=wall-38967458_358%2Fall; <http://archive.is/1ScMu>

⁷⁹³ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=860&w=wall-38967458_482%2Fall; <http://archive.is/CYOjt>

⁷⁹⁴ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=840&w=wall-38967458_523%2Fall; <http://archive.is/pRp2r>

⁷⁹⁵ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=1160&w=wall-38967458_115%2Fall; <http://archive.is/gUFOb>

⁷⁹⁶ https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=800&w=wall-38967458_577%2Fall; <http://archive.is/OTii5>

⁷⁹⁷ <https://serg-slavorum.livejournal.com/2370020.html>; <https://archive.is/QoDni>; https://vk.com/wall-38967458?offset=880&w=wall-38967458_464%2Fall; <http://archive.is/b8zCH>

Political opportunities for moderate pro-federal protest were opened by the local elites when they endorsed the Anti-Maidan and self-defence units in 2013 and allowed the Euromaidan activists to storm and occupy the regional administration building on 23 February 2014. According to Yuriy Apukhtin's⁷⁹⁸ and Serhiy Yudaev's (Yudaev, 2015, 12)⁷⁹⁹ accounts, the pro-federalisation movement began spontaneously, as the "defence of the Lenin monument" movement, on the morning of 23 February. The movement demanded first to preserve the Lenin monument on the Freedom Square and then to clear the Euromaidan activists out of the HOGA building. One of my interview participants stated that there was a genuine desire to protect the monument: "we were outraged at the fact that the nationalists wanted to demolish it" (Interview with participant, 28 09 2018). According to the protest catalogue, these spontaneous Anti-Maidan forces protested alongside the Communist Party on the Freedom Square, who organised an all-day and all-night vigilante next to the monument.⁸⁰⁰

In a later interview, Apukhtin stated that the movement attempted to unite people who had many different views but agreed on one thing: they opposed the events in Kyiv. He claims that in this period, there was a great confusion as to which side the elites were on. Apukhtin stressed that the local elites did not help organise the movement in Kharkiv, while in Donetsk, by contrast, the radical pro-Russian movement was "taken over by the oligarchs" and began demanding autonomy from Ukraine from early March. The Anti-Maidan and pro-federal activists could not reconcile their moderate demands with these radical demands made in Donetsk.⁸⁰¹

According to Protest Organiser 2, Kharkiv's "Russian Spring" was "political all the way through" (Interview, 28 09 2018). Kharkiv activists were weary of making radical demands, such as a complete autonomy from Ukraine or unity with Russia. According to Protest Organiser 2, this was because Protest Organiser 1 and other prominent activists did not want to risk people's lives if they had to confront the state. For Yudaev and Protest Organiser 2, the main purpose of the pro-federalisation protest in Kharkiv

⁷⁹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bynkj_Nic0Q

⁷⁹⁹ https://bambuser.com/v/4515201?fb_action_ids=10152132571813311&fb_action_types=og.likes ; Streaming not available

⁸⁰⁰ "Chto proiskhodilo na ploshchadi Svobody", 057, 23 February 2014.

⁸⁰¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bynkj_Nic0Q

was “to keep distracting the junta from Donetsk and Luhansk” and help Donetsk and Luhansk organise the insurgency (Yudaev, 2015, 63). This was confirmed in my interview with Protest Organiser 1, who said that the demands of the pro-federalisation protestors in Kharkiv remained stable, political and moderate. They included the demands to federalise Ukraine and make the Russian language the official language of the state. The demand to unite with Russia was “a provocation that came from Donetsk”, according to him (24 09 2018). As the protest catalogue demonstrates (see the chapter on protest potential), the appeal to Russia was strong at the beginning of the protest in Kharkiv; however, later it became superseded by the demand for the referendum. Consistent direct appeals to Russia were made sporadically by small pan-Slavic groups such as *Sut’ Vremeni*,⁸⁰² who were not leading the pro-federal protest. By contrast, the organisations united under Apukhtin’s Civic Forum, such as *Velikaya Rus*, *Rus’ Triedinaya* and others did not make direct appeals to the ethnic patron.⁸⁰³ The only direct appeal to the ethnic patron that I am aware of was made by Apukhtin’s Civic Forum on 21 February 2014. It was published on the Forum’s social media page. It was addressed to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. It described Kharkiv as a thoroughly Russian city that stood against “aggressive Galician spiritual and cultural expansion”. The appeal asked for help from Russia to defend the protestors against the Right Sector and the possible civil war.⁸⁰⁴

The protest organisers and participants I have interviewed attributed this inability to make radical demands and militarise the movement also to a certain degree of resource mobilisation failure. By “militarisation” I understand the ability of activists and protestors to find weapons and mobilise people who would be ready to fight. As Protest Organiser 2 revealed to me, he struggled to find people “who would want to fight”. “Kharkiv is a city of intelligentsia; look at Protest Organiser 1 [meaning he is a representative of the Kharkiv intelligentsia]” (Protest Organiser 2, interview 28 09 2018). This is congruent with what Protest Organiser 1 told me but refused to go into detail (24 09 2018). “We had

⁸⁰² https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=6080&q=%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-25354839_7459;http://archive.is/oMZyE;https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=5940&q=%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-25354839_8152_r8201;http://archive.is/cWokg.

⁸⁰³ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/4632551.html>; <http://archive.is/F1ycy>.

⁸⁰⁴ <https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=820&own=1>; <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/3914542.html>

great difficulties finding weapons and arming our people,” he said, “But I would not want to go into detail about this”. According to Protest Organiser 2, in Donetsk “people were ready to take up arms” (Interview 28 09 2018). By contrast, in Kharkiv, “the protest was purely political; I struggled to find people who would want to fight”. Protest Organiser 2 claimed that he began searching for such people from the very first day of the Russian Spring.

Protest Organiser 2 also said that Yudaev and Lohinov, “the men from the grassroots,” refused to fight. He described the outcomes of the massive pro-federal protest on 1 March in the following terms: “I was left alone in the regional administration. I called all the different organisations on their phones, [including Yudaev’s group], but there was no one who could come and help me defend the regional administration”. Overall, Yudaev and his group did not have concrete ideas and were not ready to fight, Protest Organiser said. “I couldn’t find the people like Mozgovoi, Motorola and Givi,” he said. “Motorola came to Kharkiv and said “yes, these people are not ready to kill”. “I knew the people who occupied the Luhans’k SBU – these people were ready to kill”. Overall, “the key was the storming of the SBU and local police stations to get weapons – but neither Yudaev nor Apukhtin were prepared to do this”.

Both protest organisers attributed this to the culture and psychological makeup of the people in the respective regions, with Donetsk being a “young” region where “miners, who risked their lives daily, were always ready to fight” (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018), while Kharkiv was the “city of intelligentsia”, with nearly 250,000 students before the end of the Soviet Union. Protest Organiser 1 maintained that, due to its high levels of crime, Donetsk was always prone to rapid militarisation (Interview 24 09 2018). Protest Organiser 2 stated that people in Kharkiv “were used to resolving problems in a different way” (Interview 28 09 2018).

Another aspect of resource mobilisation failure that I discussed with the protest organisers was the lack of material resources. According to Protest Organiser 1, the activists had few resources at the beginning of the protest (Interview 24 09 2018). As Protest Organiser 2 told me, they had difficulties “finding a black and white printer to print out leaflets”, in contrast to a more well-endowed Borot’ba (interview 28 09 2018). Protest Organiser 2 also maintained that both the Communists and Sut’ Vremeni were asking their leadership for help but no one helped them. He claimed that Alla Aleksandrovskaya, the leader of

Kharkiv branch of the Communist Party in Kharkiv and “a woman with an iron will”, organised the protests using her own resources, without any coordination or input from Symonenko, the leader of the CPU. Similarly, Protest Organiser 2 claimed that Sut’ Vremeni asked its leader Sergey Kurginyan for resources but these failed to come by. One of my interviewees who participated in the protests confirmed that the “provocative” Kharkiv People’s Republic declared on 7 April 2014 “was not sustainable” because the people instituting it “lacked resources” (Interview, participant, 28 09 2018). The chairman of the *Russkoe Vechе* Hennadiy Makarov stated on 24 March that some pro-Russian organisations lacked financial resources to acquire sound amplifiers and cars to be used at the meetings and to carry the equipment.⁸⁰⁵

There were also some leadership problems. For example, several independent leaders with their own ideas, such as Lohinov and Yudaev, began emerging early on (Protest Organiser 1, interview 24 09 2018). Yudaev devotes much attention to leadership problems in his chronicle. According to Protest Organiser 2, however, this was because Yudaev “did not satisfy his ambition” to become the overall leader of the movement (28 09 2018). His chronicle nonetheless highlights some of the problems facing the movement, and these problems were confirmed by one of my interviewees directly and indirectly by the protest organisers. Yudaev claimed that many people were disappointed with the early pro-federalisation movement as the leaders constantly bickered over money. This was confirmed in one of the interviews with a participant whom I asked why the movement failed to effect change: “this was the organisers’ mistake and financial mismanagement; a lot of money was stolen” (Interview, participant, 28 09 2018).

Leaders suspected each other of provocation and selfishness. As Protest Organiser 1 told me, Massalov and Makarov were “professional Russians,” that is they participated in the protest in order to advance their own cause. He did not trust them and they did not seem to him to be good leaders. Yudaev believed that Lohinov was Kernes’ creation (Yudaev, 2015, 19). Some in Apukhtin’s camp also contended that Lohinov was Kernes’ protégé introduced into the pro-federalisation movement to break it up.⁸⁰⁶

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http://www.ravnopravie.org/news/novosti/dva_mitinga_v_harkove_vliyanie_na_ploshchadi_zahvatyvaet_trockistskaya_borotba.html; <http://archive.is/5bUgP>.

⁸⁰⁶ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=420&own=1&w=wall-67607008_1198; <http://archive.is/RwxwZ>

Yudaev suspected everyone to have worked for the SBU and Kernes. He wrote: “Trofimov, Gur’yanov and Lohinov... These are the people who paved the way for Massalov and his clique. They did not care about the Anti-Maidan. They did not put themselves to the service of the people but the SBU from the beginning” (Yudaev, 2015, 22). Yudaev wrote on one of the people who joined the movement later, Anton Gur’yanov: “Gur’yanov left the [Lenin defence movement] on 26 February. I was sure that he left just like everybody else. But then we found out that he had been to the SBU [office]. It seemed that he was about to be jailed for promoting separatism. When I spoke to him to find out, it emerged that he decided to cooperate with the SBU” (Yudaev, 2015, 14). Massalov, according to him, was a “political prostitute” who served the SBU, Avakov, Kernes and the Party of Regions (Yudaev, 2015, 29). On this video, the nascent Ukrainian Eastern Bloc headed by Yudaev calls Apukhtin and Borot’ba provocateurs.⁸⁰⁷ These leadership problems in the end may have resulted in the lack of organisation of the movement (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018) and the lack of a guiding idea (Protest Organiser 1 interview 24 09 2018). When asked how these internal problems could have contributed to the final outcome of peace, Protest Organiser 2 stated: “We confronted very well prepared people in the form of state-supported and oligarch-supported squads; these people had been preparing for the [government overthrow] for 10 years, by Nalyvaichenko, the former head of the SBU”. “What could have the disorganised movement of Kharkivites accomplished when confronted by these people?” he asked.

However, process tracing revealed that this resource mobilisation failure was the result of the local elites’ actions. Protest in Kharkiv mirrored the diffused patronage nature of the region in many ways. Activists disassociated themselves from the radicals of Oplot and strove to use the resources of moderate organisations in order to make more effective claims on the local elites. The byproduct of this decision was that the more specific claims of the pro-federal protestors became diluted by the more abstract claims of the organisations they sought to unite with. Additionally, due to the more transparent nature of information flows between the region and the centre, clandestine military mobilisation did not take place. Radicals such as Yudaev and Lohinov were sidelined or “hoodwinked” by Kernes, as I demonstrated above. The leaders also suspected Borotba and other organisations, especially those led by the deputy of

⁸⁰⁷ “Ukrainskii vostochnyi blok”, *YouTube*, 30 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-HYW7LZQJo>.

the city council Ihor Massalov, to have worked for Kernes. In the end, the protestors did not receive any help from Russia. On 6 and 7 April, the actions of the activists reliant on the local elites and the actions of the elites converged, as I demonstrate below.

Thus, to make more effective claims on the local elites, pro-federal activists had to rely on resources of other organisations, such as the Communist Party, with whom they worked particularly closely (Protest Organiser 1 interview 28 09 2018), and, later, Borot'ba (ibid.). At the end of 2013, Apukhtin brought Velikaya Rus together with more than 30 other organisations. Just before the referendum *veche* on 16 March, Yehor Lohinov, claimed that the consultative body of pro-federalisation activists included over 50 organisations, among them Borot'ba, Cossacks, Afghan fighters, and others. Ihor Massalov claimed that by 16 March, the pro-federal movement united more than 100 organisations.⁸⁰⁸ On 30 March 2014, the organisation was merged with yet more organisations and became “the Movement Yugo-Vostok” or “South-East Movement”.⁸⁰⁹ Apukhtin later described the experience of such spontaneous amalgamation of resources and its effects in an interview: “At the beginning, our movement was called “Grazhdanski Forum Kharkova” (“Kharkiv’s Civic Forum”); recently it has been renamed into the social movement “Yugo-Vostok”. The Communists were doing something together with us or on their own. Besides, there appeared the movement “Borot’ba”. Then the movement “Rassvet” appeared and it soon became “Ukrainian Eastern Bloc”. We had our own disagreements, and last Sunday (6 April), we were divided, we had two meetings on the same topic” (on this further below).⁸¹⁰

The relationship between Borot'ba and the pro-federal activists was very complex. Protest Organiser 2 told me that Borot'ba might have worked for the SBU. According to Yudaev’s memoir, shortly after the events of 1 March, the activists began renting Borot'ba office (Yudaev, 2015, 20). The office was located on the central Sumska street, next to the Freedom Square, which came in handy for the activists. “When our tents next to the [Lenin] monument were dismantled (Yudaev refers to the end of the Lenin defence movement),” Yudaev writes, “the guys from Borot’ba took us in. At the time, they were our wholehearted associates. Their office was located along the Sumska street, next to the Freedom Square. Each

⁸⁰⁸ “V Khar’kove provedut narodnyi veche-referendum”, *Nabnews*, 12 March 2014.

⁸⁰⁹ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/6188252.html>; <http://archive.is/SEB7D>.

⁸¹⁰ “Lider Khar’kovskogo dvizheniia “Yugo-Vostok”: Rossiia siuda voiska ne vvedet”, *Ria Novosti*, 12 April 2014.

morning, day, and evening we gathered in that office” (20). Both protest organisers confirmed to me that their cooperation with Borot’ba began on 8 March 2014. These activists sometimes relied on Borot’ba for filing their meeting requests with the city council, such as on 23 March.⁸¹¹

Despite relying on their resources, the pro-federal activists clashed with Borot’ba around their key demands. Borot’ba activists often took an anti-Russian stance during the pro-federalisation meetings in Kharkiv. On 8 March, one of its leaders Serhiy Kirichuk voiced the demands of the Borot’ba, such as the self-rule for the south-east and the nationalisation of the oligarchs’ property. He claimed that several pro-Putin activists tried attacking Borot’ba for their anti-war position and their criticisms of the Customs Union. During that meeting, Borot’ba was actively against the “occupation of Ukraine” and war claiming that the working people of the western Ukraine were not their enemies. The protest was dubbed the “Ukrainian Spring” as a snub to the Russian Spring perhaps.⁸¹² During the meeting on 9 March, Kirichuk addressed the crowds with an anti-Putin rhetoric: “... Putin has played into the hands of the new regime. But the disappointment [with the new regime] is growing and soon it will lead to major social upheavals... By that time, we need to wrest the power from the hands of fascists and oligarchs...” According to other activists, Borot’ba was adamantly against Ukraine joining the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. They wanted Ukraine to be independent and “not exploited by the Russian oligarchs”. Equally, they did not support Ukraine joining the Russian Orthodox civilisation.⁸¹³ Indeed, judging by the activity on their VK page, they did not make appeals to the ethnic patron and did not agitate for joining the Customs Union.⁸¹⁴ The only demand that Borot’ba had in common with pro-Russian activists was the demand for a greater self-rule for the south-east: “We are a Ukrainian movement, we support the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but we also say that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is only possible when the rights of the people of the South-East are taken into consideration”.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/03/25/>; <http://archive.is/oEy1j>.

⁸¹² <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/03/08/>; <http://archive.is/9sphZ>.

⁸¹³ http://www.ravnopravie.org/news/novosti/dva_mitinga_v_harkove_vliyanie_na_plocshadi_zahvatyvaet_trockistskaya_Borot'ba.html; <http://archive.is/5bUgP>.

⁸¹⁴ <https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=400&own=1>; <http://archive.is/UgXNW>.

⁸¹⁵ <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/04/02/>; <https://archive.is/QUZJa>; “Borot’ba za Yugo-Vostok. Kto, Skol’ko, Zachem”, *MediaPort*, 22 March 2014.

This was clearly a moderate demand. Kirichuk in his March interview stated flatly that they were a “Ukrainian” rather than “pro-Russian” movement.⁸¹⁶

These clashes were often quite severe and led to some practical consequences, such as the diversion of the meetings, bickering over the microphone on the stage, and loss of the ordinary people’s trust. Overall, both ordinary people participating in the protest and pro-federalisation activists had low trust in Borot’ba. One of my interviewees who participated in the protests and was friends with Ihnat Kramskoi (nickname “Topaz”) and the late Yevhen Zhilin (the leader of “Oplot”) stated that Borot’ba did not inspire his trust (interview participant, 28 09 2018). He called it a “shadowy” organisation, possibly introduced into the pro-federal movement by the local elites to break it up. Similarly, Yudaev claimed that Borot’ba tried to “break up the pro-federalisation movement from the beginning” (Yudaev, 2015, 53). LiveJournal user called Borot’ba’s claims too abstract,⁸¹⁷ while Apukhtin stated that the pro-federal movement had “a few common points [with Borot’ba], but there were a lot of provocateurs among them”.⁸¹⁸ In the same interview, Apukhtin claimed that Borot’ba worked for Kernes.⁸¹⁹ In the 2016 interview, the ex-governor of Kharkiv Ihor Baluta confessed that he used “agents” to infiltrate the ranks of the pro-federalisation activists to monitor their actions.⁸²⁰ Perhaps, Borot’ba and its offshoot “Narodnoe Edinstvo” were these agents. Protest Organiser 2 told me that Borot’ba might have worked for the SBU.

Hennadiy Makarov, the chairman of the coordination council of Russian *Vechi*, recalled the meetings on 22 and 23 March: “[Borot’ba] gave the microphone only to their own activists but not to the representatives of other organisations”. For example, Ihor Massalov, who was elected a people’s governor by several organisations, was also not given a chance to speak. Makarov claimed to have tried to influence the meeting and showed to Borot’ba’s leader Serhiy Kirichuk one of his publications, where he praised Yanukovych. “Serhiy rejected it immediately and argued that Borot’ba does not recognise Yanukovych as President,” Makarov wrote, “and do not even want his name to be mentioned.” Makarov was equally

⁸¹⁶ “Borot’ba za Yugo-Vostok. Kto, Skol’ko, Zachem”, *MediaPort*, 22 March 2014;

⁸¹⁷ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/8800265.html>; <http://archive.is/a5Ckr>.

⁸¹⁸ “Politzaklyuchennyi Yuriy Apukhtin”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVKE57sLp0>

⁸¹⁹ See also https://vk.com/wall-67607008?q=%D0%91%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82%D1%8C%D0%B1%D0%B0&w=wall-67607008_1198 <http://archive.is/hilJY>

⁸²⁰ “Eks-gubernator Khar’kovshchiny Igor’ Baluta: “Dlia menia reshaiushchim stalo 22 aprelia – likvidatsiia separatistskogo gorodka vozle pamiatnika Leninu”, *Censor.net*, 7 April 2014.

unhappy with Borot'ba slogans being too abstract: "Apart from such abstract notions as "all oligarchs are bad", "Kharkiv is our city", "We are against Nazism", Borot'ba did not offer anything concrete".⁸²¹

Makarov said that both him and Massalov were approached by people angry at the abstract claims made by Borot'ba. The people were concerned about what they should do after the meeting.⁸²²

Another practical consequence of these clashes confirmed by Protest Organiser 2 was the diversion of some meetings. On 30 March for example, when pro-federalisation activists were opening the memory plaque to the Anti-Maidan activists killed on Rymarska Street on 14 March, Apukhtin tried taking people to Rymarska; instead the meeting was diverted by Borot'ba who took the people first to the SBU, then to the Russian and Polish Embassies (Protest Organiser 2 interview 28 09 2018).⁸²³ To Protest Organiser 2 this was a "rare example of nastiness". Overall, he said, Borot'ba was "trying to spearhead the protest because it was in their interest"; "they told us that they were not a pro-Russian organisation but they protested with Russian flags and shouted "Russia" with everybody else". He stated that, after spring 2014, once Borotba activists realised that they might be arrested, they stopped their activities in Kharkiv.

Protest Organiser 1 confirmed to me that Borotba disappeared from the Kharkiv political scene in June 2014 (interview 28 09 2018).

Finally, my own research into an armed mobilisation demonstrates that, compared to Donetsk, there was little of such mobilisation. Spontaneous armed formations were unheard of, although there were registered movements, such as various Cossack hundreds.⁸²⁴ This is in stark contrast with Donetsk.

Unlike in Donetsk where spontaneous mobilisation of young, potentially armed, people into the Anti-Maidan units began in late January, in Kharkiv such mobilisation took place on a more limited scale from 28 February. The spontaneously organised self-defence units were comparatively rare, their activities were

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http://www.ravnopravie.org/news/novosti/dva_mitinga_v_harkove_vliyanie_na_plocshadi_zahvatyvaet_trockistskaya_Borot'ba.html ; <http://archive.is/5bUgP>

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http://www.ravnopravie.org/news/novosti/dva_mitinga_v_harkove_vliyanie_na_plocshadi_zahvatyvaet_trockistskaya_Borot'ba.html ; <http://archive.is/5bUgP>

⁸²³ <https://emelamud.livejournal.com/120725.html>; <http://archive.is/CvxGP>.

⁸²⁴ "Lyubotinskaya kazach'ya sotnya", OO "Terskoe kazachestvo Kharkova", OO "Krasnogradskaya kazach'ya sotnya", OO "Lozovskaya kazach'ya sotnya", OO "Saltovskaia kazach'ya sotnya". See for this list <https://andreistp.livejournal.com/2506766.html> . <http://archive.is/8fu0z> . Using Google and Yandex advanced searches, I could not find any information whatsoever on these.

severely circumscribed,⁸²⁵ with bigger and more experienced organisations such as Borot’ba and Apukhtin’s Grazhdanski Forum directing most pro-federalisation meetings. The claims that these smaller spontaneous organisations made were broadly similar to each other. Organisations such as “Za Kharkov” professed to defend the city against “armed radicals” using exclusively peaceful methods. The members of a similar organisation, a spontaneously organised “Kharkovskoe opolchenie,” stated in an interview: “Kharkiv people and the people of the south-east are against the armed coup; we are against the illegitimate Verkhovna Rada and the destruction of the country and the war that is being forced upon us”. When the HOGA building was occupied by Euromaidan protestors on 23 February, “Kharkovskoe opolchenie” made a set of demands that resonated with the demands of other pro-federalisation activists: they demanded the building to be cleared of the activists, illegal armed units to be disbanded and Russian made the second state language. They also demanded a referendum on the status of the region. Both “Za Kharkov” and “Kharkovskoe Opolchenie” used social media platforms to organise themselves.⁸²⁶ None of these smaller organisations claimed to have had weapons.⁸²⁷ Another organisation that operated during this time was the Association of Afghan warriors. This organisation demanded weapons in order to defend the city and restore order.⁸²⁸ Protest Organiser 2 revealed to me that Afghan fighters and paratroopers “did not support us and followed their superiors who switched their allegiance to the new government” (interview 28 09 2018).

Eventually, due to the insufficient signals from both the local elites and the activists, the latter failed to secure resources from Russia. In his interview with me, Protest Organiser 2 detailed his travails trying to obtain resources from Russia in early March: “I was in Crimea from 12 March until 17 March ... looking for help”. He then said he approached the head of the resistance movement in Sevastopol and was told that “no directions have been given to us in relation to Kharkiv”. “They told me directly and simply that no one was going to bother about Kharkiv”, he said. This was despite the fact that he claimed to have been known to these people (“I could have at least said my name and [they would have recognised me]”).

⁸²⁵ Despite my best attempts at trying to find more information about organisations such as “Za Kharkov” and “Kharkovskoe Opolchenie” mentioned here, I could not find anything.

⁸²⁶ “V Khar’kove odna za drugoi vznikaiut obshchestvennye organizatsii, trebuiushchie presech’ ekstremizm i radikalizm”, *Nabnews*, 28 February 2014.

⁸²⁷ “Bilia Budynku Rad tryvae proroisii’kyii piket”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 5 March 2014.

⁸²⁸ “Khar’kovskie afgantsy gotovy s oruzhiem navodit’ poriadok v gorode”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 1 March 2014.

He then told me that he went to Moscow at the beginning of June and saw some people from Kharkiv who were asking for weapons to go back and fight in Kharkiv. “[The people from Moscow] said : “Go to the Donbas”. “[Overall], the maximum resources we could get from Moscow was the money to buy flags and to bail out our friends captured by the SBU”. “We bailed out several people this way,” he told me.

Yudaev in his chronicle also went at length to describe how he tried – unsuccessfully – to secure some funding from Crimea and Russia for the movement. He detailed his travails in Crimea where he was introduced to Sergey Aksenov’s people. Yudaev met with Aksenov’s aide to discuss Kharkiv’s Euromaidan (Yudaev, 2015, 41). Yudaev was offered help by some people from Crimea such as Marat Chistov, only to be hoodwinked and abandoned by them during the crucial episode of the pro-federalisation contention on 6 – 8 April. Yudaev stated that he pressed not for financial support but for people: “our priority was not to get financial backing but some people – we needed weapons and one or two groups of well-prepared “little green men” (Yudaev, 2015, 52). Yudaev stated that Konstantin Dolhov, one of the people directly sent by the Crimeans to help Kharkiv pro-federal activists, failed to secure funding from Russia: “I asked him what he had. He said “Luhans’k and Donets’k have received instructions regarding tomorrow’s resistance. Then I asked him about Kharkiv and he said that Kharkiv did not receive any instructions” (Yudaev, 2015, 63). He blamed Dolhov for having failed to secure financial backing from Russia and Crimea. According to Protest Organiser 2, Yudaev was a hopeless case because he was not known to anyone in either Crimea or Russia.

8. Local elites and local activists converge

How the moderate nature of the local protest turned on the diffused nature of the regional patronage was finally and clearly demonstrated by the events from 6 to the morning of 8 April, when Kharkiv regional administration building was stormed and occupied by the pro-federalisation activists. During this brief period, the protestors continued to make demands on the local elites while the elites continued to demonstrate their strong pro-Ukrainian stance. All of my interviewees, including Protest Organiser 1, confirmed the crucial importance of these two days for the pro-federalisation protest. According to Protest Organiser 1, the eviction of the pro-federalisation activists from the building on the morning of 8 April and the imprisonment of some of them were the key events, after which the city became “engulfed in terror” and the possibility of an armed conflict in Kharkiv disappeared. The most

radical activists disappeared from Kharkiv, although protests continued on a regular basis. By 3 May 2014, Yuriy Apukhtin was arrested, together with a few associates.⁸²⁹

The pro-federalisation meetings on the Freedom Square on 6 April were divided. Reports differed as to how many meetings there were on the Square. Some claimed that there were four meetings; others stated that there were three.⁸³⁰ The first was organised by Yehor Lohinov, who formed his own “Ukrainian Eastern Bloc”. The second one was organised by Apukhtin’s Yugo-Vostok and CPU (Alla Aleksandrovskaya). The third meeting gathered very few people; they were Russian nationalists standing under the flags of “Russian Unity”. The fourth meeting was organised by Borot’ba and advocated federalisation.⁸³¹ The protestors demanded Ukraine to be transformed into a federal republic, with a South-Eastern autonomy. They demanded the regional council to conduct a local referendum on federalisation.⁸³²

The protestors openly quarrelled with each other on 6 April. There was a major rift between Lohinov’s Ukrainian Eastern Bloc and Apukhtin’s Yugo-Vostok. Lohinov threatened to burn the car of the Yugo-Vostok if it parked next to the Lenin monument.⁸³³ Protest Organiser 2 claimed that Lohinov aimed at marshalling the potential of the radical youth at that meeting. Yudaev was similarly appalled at the disunity of the meetings. “When I came to the Square, I was shocked: there were two tribunes, in different places.” According to Yudaev, the “provocateur and SBU agent” Anton Gur’yanov was present at the meeting, standing next to Konstantin Dolhov, who was sent to Kharkiv by the Crimeans to help organise the resistance movement (Yudaev, 2015, 63).

The meetings then united and advanced towards the HOGA. At 9pm on 6 April, the pro-federalisation activists began storming the HOGA. All the reports state that the police and the internal troops, who were protecting the building entrance, did not show much resistance.⁸³⁴ According to Yudaev, there were

⁸²⁹ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=400&own=1&w=wall-67607008_1526; <http://archive.is/ZclCG>.

⁸³⁰ “Raskol v stane prorossiiskikh aktivistov. Na ploshchadi Svobody 4 raznykh mitinga”, *Gorodskoi Dozor*, 6 April 2014.

⁸³¹ <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/04/07/>; <http://archive.is/uJWgT>.

⁸³² <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/3892712.html?page=7>; <http://archive.is/ZPLRS>

⁸³³ <https://mikle1.livejournal.com/3892712.html?page=7>; <http://archive.is/ZPLRS>

⁸³⁴ “Activists still inside Kharkiv regional administration building – eyewitnesses”, *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 7 April 2014; “Kharkivs’ku ODA zakhopleno. Nad budivleiu vysyt’ trikolor”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 7 April 2014; “Stril’ba na ploshchi Svobody u Kharkovi. Mitynguval’nyky hochut vyboriv”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 7 April 2014.

certain informers amongst the police who persuaded the police to yield to the protesters and drop all resistance. Yudaev writes: “Our commanders of the “secret” divisions studied the situation inside the HOGA building and talked to the officers of the Ministry of the Interior. We told the officers that we would not beat them – we would just push them aside and calmly enter the building” (Yudaev, 2015, 66). Hence the occupiers took over the building. According to Yudaev, it took them less than 5 minutes to do so (Yudaev, 2015, 67).

Accounts differ as to whether the protesters occupied the entire building. According to different reports, they blocked the entrance to the HOGA but did not occupy the whole building.⁸³⁵ Homa stated that they did not enter the rooms.⁸³⁶ However, according to an eye witness they occupied the whole building.⁸³⁷ Yudaev and the journalists covering the events stated that the activists aimed at staying in the building for “at least one day”. Around 21:30 they removed the Ukrainian flag from the building and replaced it with a Russian tricolor.⁸³⁸ Yudaev writes: “Several of our divisions managed to climb to the very top and hang the Russian flag” (Yudaev, 2015, 70).

It was reported that on the morning of 7 April, the activists rowed with each other over whether they advocated the unity with Russia or federalisation of Ukraine.⁸³⁹ They then began negotiations with the local authorities. According to Yudaev, there were at least 40 representatives of the protestors, among them the deputies Dmytro Sviatash, Alla Aleksandrovskaya, and Apukhtin (Yudaev, 2015, 68). Kernes was among the negotiators. According to my interview with Protest Organiser 1, the activists demanded federalisation. Yudaev also claimed that the activists converged around the demand for the “economic independence from Kyiv and the status of the Russian language” (Yudaev, 2015, 68). Some newspapers reported a confusing array of issues put forward by the activists: “The pro-Russian activists demand a discussion for the possibility of calling an emergency session on the issue of the referendum, as well as political, socio-economic issues, issues relating to mobilization, and “the issue of liability for using weapons against civilians.” The negotiation participants are now having a heated debate on whether

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ “Shcho vidbuvaet’sia vseredyni Kharkivs’koi ODA”, *Slobids’kii Kraï*, 7 April 2014.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ “Stril’ba na ploshchi Svobody u Kharkovi”.

⁸³⁹ “Militsiia pokidaet zdanie HOGA. Kernes vstupil v perepalku s mitinguiushchimi”, *057*, 7 April 2014.

Viktor Yanukovych is the legitimate president of Ukraine, an Interfax correspondent has reported. Alla Aleksandrovskaya, first secretary of the Kharkiv region's committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, has suggested calling an extraordinary session of the region's council to schedule a consultative poll on three issues (federative structure of Ukraine, giving the Russian language state status, and Ukraine's membership in NATO), if a local referendum cannot be conducted”.⁸⁴⁰ Some activists voiced their dissatisfaction at the fact that the attack by the Right Sector on the remembrance meeting of the Rymarska murders was not reported or investigated.⁸⁴¹ The activists claimed that the new government was not going to amnesty them and that they had already opened proceedings against them, while the Right Sector was amnestied within hours. They complained of unjust persecution for the non-violent takeover of the HOGA on 1 March.⁸⁴²

According to most accounts, Kernes opposed the referendum. He told the activists upfront that no referendum would be held because it was unlawful.⁸⁴³ Yudaev, however, wrote: “On 7 April, I called Dolhov, who said that we managed to pressure the authorities into conducting an extraordinary session on the economic independence from Kyiv and the status of the Russian language; he was now gathering some documents to that effect” (Yudaev, 2015, 68). According to the pro-federalisation activists conducting the negotiations, Kernes was trying to redirect the negotiations towards the investigation of the Rymarska murders.⁸⁴⁴ Protest Organiser 1 told me that he was allowed to speak during the negotiation process and demanded the referendum. “However, they found some judicial loophole in the current law on the referendum and said that it could not be conducted if there was one village in the region that did not want a referendum” (Interview, 24 09 2018). According to some reports, Kernes was adamantly against the referendum: “There will not be any referendums on separatist topics here. Kharkiv is part of Ukraine.” Kernes said that holding a referendum would be illegal and he proposed replacing it with a broad-based opinion poll to help determine the mood of the people of the city and the region.

⁸⁴⁰ “Negotiators in Kharkiv region's administration discuss status of Yanukovych, possibility of referendum” *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 7 April 2014; “Kernes predlozhl provesti v Khar'kove vmesto referendumu sotsopros”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 7 April 2014.

⁸⁴¹ “Itogi peregovorov antimaidana s Kernesom”, 057, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.; “Kernes predlozhl provesti v Khar'kove vmesto referendumu sotsopros”.

⁸⁴⁴ “V HOGA – tolpa prorossiiskikh aktivistov, zato na kryshu vernulsia ukrainskii flag”, 057, 7 April 2014.

Kernes also said that the pro-federalisation protesters were very heterogeneous and that they were not yet able to formulate a common set of demands.⁸⁴⁵

Then, according to Yudaev, an extraordinary thing happened that should not have happened – the proclamation of Kharkiv People’s Republic on the evening of 7 April. The activists drew up a list of alternative councillors and intended to convene a session to schedule a secession referendum. It was announced that "The 'Council of councillors of the Kharkiv territorial community', acting as the Kharkiv regional council, has taken a decision to create a sovereign state entitled 'Kharkiv People's Republic' which will 'build relations with other states in compliance with international law". Also, a decision was taken to "appeal to [the deposed] Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich" asking him to legitimize this assembly and its documents, and to the government of the Russian Federation to ensure the peaceful holding of a referendum in Kharkiv Region as mediators.⁸⁴⁶

According to both Protest Organiser 1 and Yudaev’s chronicle, the proclamation of Kharkiv People’s Republic was “a provocation imported from Donetsk,” because it was not supported by the people. As Protest Organiser 1 told me, he communicated with Denis Pushilin in Donetsk who offered to conduct the referendum in early April. The Organiser resisted the idea because “it was not supported by the people”. Moreover, in the interview, he maintained that the proclamation of the referendum in Donetsk on 11 May 2014 was also “a provocation”. Yudaev also believed that this was a provocation: “Because all the real leaders were negotiating at that time, suddenly [Anton] Gur’yanov appeared in the foyer of the HOGA. This Gur’yanov began proclaiming Kharkiv People’s Republic, autonomy from Ukraine and a new government. This was a good idea. But at that moment we could not have put it into practice – we did not have weapons or resources... Gur’yanov deliberately annulled everything that was achieved through the negotiations. He portrayed us as inconsistent ... people.” (Yudaev, 2015, 69) According to one of the participants in the protest, the activists lacked resources to build and defend the “republic” (Interview, participant, 28 09 2018).

⁸⁴⁵ “Kharkiv Mayor Kernes: It Is Impossible To Hold Referendum On Federalization In Kharkiv Region”, *Ukrainian News*, 7 April 2014.

⁸⁴⁶ “Separatists in east Ukraine announce creation of 'Kharkiv people's republic', BBC *Monitoring Newsfile*, 7 April 2014; <https://borotba-ua.livejournal.com/2014/04/08/>; <http://archive.is/WUHGz>

In the meantime, the Kyiv government began preparing a “counter-terrorist” operation. Due to the earlier sabotage by the Berkut,⁸⁴⁷ the Minister of the Interior Avakov had to summon the police force from Poltava and Vinnitsa.⁸⁴⁸ Around 11pm on 7 April, a police force was brought from Poltava to clear the building from the protestors.⁸⁴⁹ There were around 270 policemen participating in the clearing of the building.⁸⁵⁰ The operation began at around 620am on 8 April and finished by 7:30. As a result, 70 protestors were detained.⁸⁵¹ The press service of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry stated that the detainees “were suspected of illegal actions associated with separatism, staging mass disturbances, inflicting damage on people's health and violating a whole series of articles [of the Penal Code].⁸⁵² Radical protestors, such as Ehor Lohinov, were detained.⁸⁵³ Three were put under home arrest and 59 were put in custody.⁸⁵⁴ By 10 April, 46 were put under custody for 2 months.⁸⁵⁵ On 10 April, the Kharkiv district administrative court banned all mass rallies to ensure public order.⁸⁵⁶

In summary, I have illustrated in this section how the moderate protest emerged in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv not as a result of a resource mobilisation failure but as a result of the actions of the local elites.

⁸⁴⁷ “Khar’kovskie aktivisty piketiruiut upravlenie MVD”, *Nabnews*, 11 April 2014. “Ukrainian interior minister threatens to fire 30 percent of Kharkov police Itar-Tass”, *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁴⁸ “Avakov rasskazal, kak v Khar’kove zaderzhivali separatistov”, *Segodnia*, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁴⁹ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?q=%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0&w=wall-67607008_583;http://archive.is/InMyU.

⁸⁵⁰ “Na Vostok Ukrainy pribyli spetspodrazdeleniia MVD iz drugikh regionov- Avakov”, *Censor.net*, 7 April 2014.

⁸⁵¹ “About 70 separatists detained in antiterrorist operation in Ukraine's Kharkiv”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁵² “About 70 separatists detained in antiterrorist operation in Ukraine's Kharkiv” *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁵³ “Kharkiv separatists used grenades against police officers - Ukraine acting president”, *Interfax: Ukrainian General Newswire*, 8 April 2014.

⁸⁵⁴ “Prorosiis’kii mitynguval’nyky otrymaly sudovyyi vyrok”, *Slobids’kii Kraii*, 11 April 2014.

⁸⁵⁵ “Court in Ukraine's Kharkiv remands 46 pro-Russian activists in custody”, *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 10 April 2014

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

9. Radical protest in a concentrated patronage region

9.1. Challengers

Many scholars writing on the conflict in the Donbas have pointed to the low popularity of pro-Russian political parties in Donetsk region.⁸⁵⁷ Indeed, in this region with a supposedly strong pro-Russian orientation, the small pro-Russian parties, such as the Russian Bloc not only did not win any seats in the regional government in 2010, despite having nominated their candidates in the local elections,⁸⁵⁸ but they were not even allowed to participate in the elections due to “the lack of experience and ineptitude of [their] candidates”.⁸⁵⁹ These parties conducted very low-scale meetings on various celebration dates, such as the anniversary of the Pereyaslavl Rada. For the Russian Bloc, I was able to catalogue and corroborate evidence for three such regular meetings: the “Russian March” on 4 November 2011, and the regular meetings on 1 and 9 May.⁸⁶⁰

If organisations such as the Russian Bloc strove to enter Ukrainian politics, the radical Donetsk Republic movement, at first, existed at the margins of Ukrainian political life and in 2007 was banned altogether, following an investigation by the SBU and a court ruling.⁸⁶¹ This was on the basis of their views that threatened the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Journalist 1 confirmed to me in an interview that the activists of the Donetsk Republic were “very poor but very fanatical” (19 07 2019). Journalist 1 said that

⁸⁵⁷ The most cited evidence can be found in Andrew Wilson’s book “Ukraine Crisis” on page 142.

⁸⁵⁸ “Golosa zhiteliv Donetska: 72% za Luk’yanchenko – eto fashizm”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 8 November 2010.

⁸⁵⁹ “Oni kovali pobydu dlia partii regionov v Donetske”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 8 November 2010.

⁸⁶⁰ https://vk.com/wall-50935961?offset=1200&q=%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%BA&w=wall-50935961_28; <https://archive.is/jj8Pa> ; <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2009/01/12/>; <https://archive.is/Vxx8q> ; <http://archive.is/jj8Pa> ; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_17557; <http://archive.is/0NCVB>; “V Donetske na russkom marshe s natsistskoi simbolikoi trebivali zakryt’ posol’stvo SSHA video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 November 2013.

⁸⁶¹ Andrey Purgin commented on the organisation in February 2010: “We have great difficulties in disseminating our ideas because we are being persecuted by the SBU and the current government. [The SBU opened] criminal proceedings against 3 people; these are Articles 109, 110 and 161 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code.... We have a group on social media [Vkontakte?], with around 9 thousand people. We have a great number of supporters, they all exist autonomously. We are active primarily on the Internet.... We are a social movement, we are not a political party and not represented in the regional or city councils and we do not participate in elections.... The Party of Regions supports federalisation sometimes and sometimes it forgets about it. PSPU [Progressive Socialists] supported federalisation but now they do not. But we have a very good relationship with the PSPU and Communists. But we do not have any dealings with the Party of Regions, we just don’t.” <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/214371.html> ; <http://archive.is/0MCEZ>.

they promoted the independence of Donetsk from the rest of Ukraine because of the economic potential of the region. According to the *Novosti Donbassa* and Donetsk Republic V Kontakte pages, Donetsk Republic held strong anti-Ukrainian views. For example, according to the resolutions of a conference organised by the group on 9 February 2008, the “forced ukrainisation of the south-east” was considered as “occupation” aimed at destroying the Russian people”. The resolutions denied the Ukrainian nation its existence. The conference adopted a resolution to create the Donetsk Federative Republic and to appeal to the Verkhovna Rada to federalise Ukraine. If the Rada refused, the group vowed to press for secession from Ukraine.⁸⁶²

These strong and radical pro-Russian views were expressed freely on Donetsk Republic’s social media pages and blogs. Andrey Purgin, one of the leaders of Donetsk Republic believed that Yushchenko’s ukrainisation policies led to the “genocide” of Russians.⁸⁶³ He also refused to recognise Ukraine as a viable state and wanted the Donbas to become part of Russia.⁸⁶⁴ Their regular conferences had a strong pro-Russian tinge.⁸⁶⁵ A claim that “the Donbas is Russia” began circulating on Donetsk Republic’s V Kontakte page on 7 September 2013⁸⁶⁶ and became the mainstay of its discourse throughout 2014. In 2013, they published an article discussing the changes that would potentially occur in the Donbas were it to become part of the Russian Federation.⁸⁶⁷

Significantly, even after its ban in 2007, the Donetsk Republic movement was able to hold regular celebratory meetings in central Donetsk, which means that the movement was condoned by the Donetsk city council.⁸⁶⁸ This was confirmed to me in an interview with Journalist 1 who stated that he came to

⁸⁶² <http://novosti.dn.ua/news/50743-doneckye-separatysty-trebuyut-nezavysymosty-donbassa-zayavlenye-organyzatsiy>

⁸⁶³ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%B3%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B4&w=wall-3223620_22179; <http://archive.is/SCz6M>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&w=wall-3223620_22386%2Fall; <http://archive.is/ovSAi>.

⁸⁶⁴ “V Donetske na russkom marshe”.

⁸⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69BqyQjz1go>

⁸⁶⁶ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=07092013&q=%D0%A0%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-3223620_21080; <http://archive.is/alPiz>.

⁸⁶⁷ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4&w=wall-3223620_22074; <http://archive.is/6leIL>.

⁸⁶⁸ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-3223620_21713; <http://archive.is/Pq38v>

some of their meetings (19 07 2019). Donetsk Republic held an anti-government meeting on the Constitution Day in June 2007. They were allowed to march from the Artem monument next to the city council to Lenin Square unhindered.⁸⁶⁹ On 8 November 2008, they held a “Russian World in action” meeting together with the “International Russian Front” on Lenin Square. The meeting aimed at delivering the message of the Russian World to the public.⁸⁷⁰ The regular 9 February meetings to celebrate the anniversary of the Donets’k-Kryvyi Rih Republic and to “proclaim the state sovereignty of the Donets’k Federative Republic” were all corroborated with the data on Donetsk Republic Vkontakte pages.⁸⁷¹ Journalist 1 confirmed to me that Donetsk Republic held these regular meetings almost every year since its incipience. *Novosti Donbassa* reported that the protestors, usually numbering no more than 20 people, were always allowed to march through the streets, from the Artem monument next to the city council building to the Lenin Square.⁸⁷²

Donetsk Republic and other pro-Russian movements, such as Donbass Rus’, were better endowed with mobilisation experience, crucial connections with Russia and stable mobilisation repertoire than their Kharkiv counterparts. The evidence presented here primarily comes from Donetsk Republic Vkontakte pages, donbassrus user’s blog and *Novosti Donbassa*.

Donetsk Republic had connections with various Russian social movements, such as the Eurasian Union of Youth.⁸⁷³ They regularly participated in the Lake Seliger meetings organised by the Union and the

⁸⁶⁹ <http://novosti.dn.ua/news/42156-v-donecke-nachalsya-novyy-vytok-separatystskogo-dvyzheniya>. I have attempted to triangulate the evidence on the Donetsk Republic found on *Novosti Donbassa*, which, being a staunchly pro-Ukrainian source, presented the organisation in a rather biased light, with the evidence found on Donetsk Republic archived Vkontakte (Russian social media platform) pages. I have discovered that most meetings and protests reported on *Novosti Donbassa* were not reported on Vkontakte, with the exception of the regular celebration of the Donets’k-Kryvyi Rih Republic founding anniversary.

⁸⁷⁰ <http://novosti.dn.ua/news/60994-doneckye-separatysty-v-centre-goroda-pryzyvayut-k-raskolu-ukrainy>

⁸⁷¹ “Segodnia Donbass ob’iavit o suverenitete”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 9 February 2009; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=10022009&w=wall-3223620_3720%2Fall; <http://archive.is/77PiN>

⁸⁷² “V Donetske prizvali narushit’ territorial’nuu tselostnost’ Ukrainy i RF”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 February 2010; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=11022010&w=wall-3223620_9565%2Fall; <http://archive.is/Kg5Qt>; <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2009/06/04/>; <http://archive.is/4lOy3>.

⁸⁷³ “Konferentsia “Donbass v evraziiskom proekte. Kovalenko Andrei”, *YouTube*, 27 November 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69BqyQiz1go&NR=1..>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_21902; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_19173; <http://archive.is/6tH9o>; <http://archive.is/EskEi>.

radical Russian movement Nashi.⁸⁷⁴ Throughout 2012, they held conferences on the concept of the “Russian World” and the role of the Orthodox Church in uniting Russian people. Leaders of the Eurasian Union of Youth and members of the Izborsk club actively participated in these conferences.⁸⁷⁵ They often invited Russians from the Russian regions neighbouring with Ukraine, such as Belgorod, to these conferences.⁸⁷⁶

The movement reached out to other pro-Russian movements, such as “Donbass Rus’,”⁸⁷⁷ particularly during the regular “Russian March” demonstrations held regularly in November. These pro-Russian movements and individuals organised regular meetings on broadly anti-government themes. These meetings were usually held together with other parties, such as the Communist Party of Ukraine and Progressive Socialists. The brainchild of Natalya Vitrenko’s Bloc “Donbass Rus” (“Donbasskaya Rus”) participated in these meetings.⁸⁷⁸ According to the blog run by donbassrus user, a member of “Donbass Rus’,” regular conferences and meetings were organised in Donetsk, on the historical theme such as Pereiaslavl Rada⁸⁷⁹ and the founding of Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Republic.⁸⁸⁰

While being relatively quiescent in the years that followed its ban, Donetsk Republic began organising regular pickets, meetings and campaigns once Yanukovich was in power. From 2011, they held a regular campaign to honour the Russian Flag in Donetsk.⁸⁸¹ On 4 May 2012, they organised a campaign for unity

⁸⁷⁴ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&w=wall-3223620_22502%2F&all; <http://archive.is/gBBbY>; <https://bykvu.com/mysli/2048-Donets'kaya-respublika-2005-i-dnr-2014-ot-fashistov-k-mmm-shchikam> ; <http://archive.is/QbLhk>.

⁸⁷⁵ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_19173; <http://archive.is/EskEi>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_17673 ; <http://archive.is/FWohJ>.

⁸⁷⁶ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%95%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%20%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8&w=wall-3223620_17610; <http://archive.is/sO0qH>.

⁸⁷⁷ “V Donetske na russkom marshe s natsistskoi simvolikoi trebvali zakryt’ posol’stvo SSHA video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 March 2013.

⁸⁷⁸ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2008/12/20/>; <http://archive.is/kqWBr>.

⁸⁷⁹ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2009/01/12/>; <http://archive.is/Vxx8q>

⁸⁸⁰ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2009/02/15/> ; <http://archive.is/5Yafm>.

⁸⁸¹ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-3223620_21586; <http://archive.is/NkJQy>; <https://vk.com/wall->

with Russia.⁸⁸² Throughout 2012 -2013, a number of pickets was held,⁸⁸³ at one of which a member of Edinaya Rossiya (United Russia) was present. ⁸⁸⁴In 2013, they picketed the SBU building in Donetsk⁸⁸⁵ and the USA consulate in Kyiv.⁸⁸⁶ They had activists in Horlivka and Makiivka and campaigned there.⁸⁸⁷ Both the Donetsk Republic movement and “Donbas Rus” had experience in violently confronting Ukrainian nationalist organisations,⁸⁸⁸ such as during meetings in April 2012 and during the “Russian March” meeting on 4 November 2011.⁸⁸⁹

9.2. Radical protest in a concentrated patronage region

Once Yanukovych’s network collapsed in the centre, the elites in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk began behaving very differently from their counterparts in Kharkiv. They used the time lag between the sudden change of the governing network and a viable settlement between the region and the centre (which never came to pass) to make demands on the centre to keep their concentrated patronage system. These demands concerned their ability to stay in power, continue accessing resources from the centre, and keep their assets. During this time lag, radical pro-Russian contention developed with the connivance of the regional elites (interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019).

3223620?day=01092012&q=%D1%84%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3&w=wall-3223620_14174;http://archive.is/46KL0

⁸⁸² m-kalashnikov.livejournal.com/1250205.html#cutid1; <http://archive.is/VniRH>.

⁸⁸³ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BF%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5%D1%82&w=wall-3223620_14680; <http://archive.is/uzPUD>.

⁸⁸⁴ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F&w=wall-3223620_14678; <http://archive.is/pchAr>.

⁸⁸⁵ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BF%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5%D1%82&w=wall-3223620_19913; <http://archive.is/sNeXB>.

⁸⁸⁶ “Ukrainskii vybor” v Kieve prinial uchastie v mitinge “Ruki proch’ ot Sirii!”, *YouTube*, 6 September 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BvzUiip4Po#t=13>; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BF%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5%D1%82&w=wall-3223620_21073; <http://archive.is/wdW32>.

⁸⁸⁷ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%B0&w=wall-3223620_20483; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%B0&w=wall-3223620_19594; https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=20112013&q=%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%B0&w=wall-3223620_18218; <http://archive.is/Zgd6J>; <http://archive.is/TKbYU>.

⁸⁸⁸ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2009/01/29/>; <http://archive.is/5vbUh>.

⁸⁸⁹ “V Donetske na russkom marshe”.

The rapid militarisation in the region was caused by three developments. Firstly, in stark contrast to what took place in Kharkiv city, where the radicals from Oplot were quickly neutralised, no attempt was made to control the radical groups, such as the Donetsk Republic and Pavel Gubarev's Narodnoe Opolchenie Donbassa (Donbas People's Self-Defence/Militia), in Donetsk region. In fact, Oplot fighters began arriving to Donetsk. Secondly, the office of the Security Service of Ukraine was stormed twice and weapons were acquired from its stockpiles (Protest Organiser 1 in Kharkiv, interview 24 09 2018). In my interview with Journalist 1, he stated that the buildings were taken "too easily". The SBU building was "taken by 40 people at most; nobody knew who opened the room where the weapons were stored" (19 07 2019). This was because the disturbances caused by the protestors were handled by the local police subservient to the local oligarchs, rather than the SBU, as in Kharkiv. Thirdly, Kyiv government's decision to send military hardware to Donetsk (people began spotting tanks from 16 March at the latest) can be interpreted as an attempt to break the non-transparency of information flows between Donetsk region's elites and the centre. To use the terminology of the civil war research, this meant that the Kyiv government wanted to force the elites to reveal their true intentions and begin negotiating with the centre. If we extrapolate rebel characteristics to these elites, it meant that by sending military hardware to the region, the centre wanted to find out who the rebels were (J. D. Fearon and Laitin, 2003). When Strelkov arrived to the region, it was too late to bargain.

At first, the elites in Donetsk recognised the new government. On 23 February, the governor Shyshatskiy issued a statement in which he described his meeting with Rinat Akhmetov and "other respected people" of Donetsk. The governor posted a message on the regional administration's website stating that "all of them see our common future in indivisible and independent Ukraine."⁸⁹⁰ On the following day, Shyshatskiy stated that he recognised the Rada as the only legitimate authority in the country.⁸⁹¹ On 25 February, Donetsk mayor Oleksandr Luk'yanchenko issued a similar statement.⁸⁹²

⁸⁹⁰ "Akhmetov potreboval prekratit' razgovory o separatizme – gubernator", *Novosti Donbassa*, 24 February 2014; "Akhmetov sees future of Ukraine in unity and integrity - Donetsk governor" *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 23 February 2014.

⁸⁹¹ "Ukraine's Donetsk governor says parliament only legitimate power body", *BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics*, 24 February 2014.

⁸⁹² "Donetsk Mayor Recognises Verkhovna Rada's Legitimacy", *Interfax: Russian & CIS General Newswire*, 25 February 2014.

At the same time, owing to the poor transparency of information flows between the centre and the region, clandestine armed mobilisation began taking place in Donetsk region and those who possessed arms and made radical demands took centre stage. Activist from Donetsk told me that by mid-March, there were around 37 armed groups in Donetsk (27 07 2019). Elite Member 1 confirmed to me that “after Yanukovich fled Kyiv, the people began protesting spontaneously against the radicals of the Right Sector, the nationalists, and for the federalisation of Ukraine” (22 07 2019). Most significantly, after the Cabinet was formed in Kyiv on 27 February, the elites openly endorsed Pavel Gubarev, later proclaimed “people’s governor”, known for his radicalism, and made no attempt to stop the spontaneous armed mobilisation. The radical “Donetsk Republic” group appeared at almost all of the pro-Russian meetings (Interview with Journalist 1 19 07 2019), and their flags were hoisted on important government buildings. The elites began promoting a local referendum on federalisation which was against the law (Interview with Journalist 11 07 2019; Activist in Kharkiv interview 16 07 2019).

The first anti-government meetings in Donetsk began on 22 February, after Yanukovich left Kyiv.⁸⁹³ From 23 February, there were more anti-government meetings in various parts of Donetsk,⁸⁹⁴ including on the Lenin Square and next to the regional administration building.⁸⁹⁵ People went through the streets with Russian and Communist Party’s flags,⁸⁹⁶ the flags of Donetsk Republic,⁸⁹⁷ and disrupted the memorial service to the victims of the snipers massacre (20 February in Kyiv).⁸⁹⁸ The meetings were organised by the Russian Bloc, the Communist Party of Ukraine, Gubarev’s Narodnoe Opolchenie, and Oplot,⁸⁹⁹ which is corroborated by the evidence from the video from 23 February where the speaker refers to his leader as Yevhen Zhilin.⁹⁰⁰ The meetings gathered daily, according to user frankenstein, with

⁸⁹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odzC84iFY6c>

⁸⁹⁴ “Miting v Donetske 23 fevralia 2014. Chto na samom dele dumaiut zhiteli Donetska”, *YouTube*, 24 February 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2akluruj9A>.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ On the video here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2akluruj9A>

⁸⁹⁷ See photo here: “Fotoreportazh iz tsentra Donetska 23 fevralia: storonniki novoi i staroi vlasti vstretilis”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 February 2014.

⁸⁹⁸ “Janukowitsch-Anhänger demonstrieren im Osten der Ukraine”, *Euronews*, 23 February 2014; A. Smale, “Ukraine: Joy in Kyiv Confronts Fury in the East”, *The New York Times*, 24 February 2014.

⁸⁹⁹ “Gruppy grazhdan sobiraiutsia raznykh chastiax tsentra Donetska. U nikh oruzhie?”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 February 2014; https://web.archive.org/web/20190531091631/https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=46500&own=1&w=wall-67059574_1 – Gubarev begins organising his meetings from 25 February 2014. https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=46500&own=1&w=wall-67059574_1; <http://archive.is/UVkNe>;

⁹⁰⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odzC84iFY6c>; There was an interesting age dynamics of these meetings when younger individuals appealing to direct action such as “seizure of the state administration” would be immediately labelled “provocateurs”.

up to 300 people continuously guarding Lenin monument on the Lenin Square “to protect Donetsk against the Maidan”.⁹⁰¹ This was also corroborated by the evidence from a representative of the Russian Bloc.⁹⁰²

Open calls to arms were made at these early Russian Spring meetings. During the meeting on 22 February organised by “Oplot” in Donetsk, the leaders voiced concerns over the arrival of “Banderovtsy” not only to Kharkiv but also to Donetsk.⁹⁰³ The speaker emphasised the extent of violence in Kyiv in graphic detail by claiming that his men were “shot” as if in wartime.⁹⁰⁴ He repeatedly stressed that the Maidan activists wanted to come “to kill us” and that “we cannot negotiate with them”. During the Communist Party meeting on 23 February, a man from the “Donbas defence” unit in Abakumovo proposed full military mobilisation, indicating that his unit might have possessed arms.⁹⁰⁵ The chief of Donetsk police Mykola Kryuchenko claimed that due to the proliferation of rumours about the alleged arrival of extremists to Donetsk, some people began forming self-defence groups. He further stated that the police was inundated with daily reports that there were unauthorised groups of armed people gathering in the city each day.⁹⁰⁶ Donetsk city mayor Luk’yanchenko claimed that he received pleas for protection from various people daily.⁹⁰⁷ This readiness to defend the city against the “extremists from the Maidan” is corroborated in an entry from 23 February from a LiveJournal user, describing a memorial meeting next to Taras Shevchenko monument. The protestors claimed they were defending the people of Donetsk from “Banderovtsy and Nazi from Kyiv”.⁹⁰⁸ In addition, recruitment into self-defence units was advertised on various LiveJournal pages.⁹⁰⁹ From 23 February, the so-called “Eastern Front” began forming self-defence units on the Lenin Square in Donetsk.⁹¹⁰ On 25 February, Eudard Okopov of the

⁹⁰¹ “Ne pustit’ Maidan na Donbass – obzor blogov foto video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 February 2014.

⁹⁰² <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/02/25/>; <http://archive.is/Z7Dz5>.

⁹⁰³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odzC84iFY6c>

⁹⁰⁴ See the video interview with the activists of “Eastern Front” by *Novosti Donbassa* journalists Oleksyi Matsuka and Vitaly Sizov. “V Donetske neskol’ko chelovek otkryli “Vostochnyi Front” – video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 February 2014.

⁹⁰⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aklurujd9A>

⁹⁰⁶ <http://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/2014/02/23/>; <http://archive.is/hOH03>

⁹⁰⁷ “Mer Donetska nazval provokatsiiami prizyvi k gorozhanam vziatsia za oruzhie”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 26 February 2014.

⁹⁰⁸ <http://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/2014/02/23/>; <http://archive.is/hOH03>.

⁹⁰⁹ <http://alexlotov.livejournal.com/581239.html>; <http://archive.is/u4z5I>; <https://vk.com/club65054850>; <http://archive.is/8gvD5>; <http://aloban75.livejournal.com/595222.html>; <http://archive.is/7XMzI>; “Donetsk 23 Fevralia pomianul pogibshih na Maidane i zashchishchal gubernatora – video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 February 2014.

⁹¹⁰ “V Donetske krepkie “antifashisty” razvernuli palatochnyi gorodok na ploshchadi Lenina”, *Ostron*, 27 February 2014.

“Eastern Front” asked Luk’yanchenko whether he could use barracks to train his followers.

Luk’yanchenko was reported to have agreed on condition that the groups be supervised by the police.⁹¹¹ According to my interview with Activist from Donetsk, these groups were most probably connected to some local elites (27 07 2019).

Pavel Gubarev’s Narodnoe Opolchenie probably possessed arms. In *Fakel Novorossii*, for example, Gubarev states that he used the money from his firm’s account to buy arms (Gubarev, 2016, 85). In a post on his Vkontakte page, he claimed to have received information about people who were “arming themselves en masse”.⁹¹² In an interview to Lenta.ru, he claimed to have a shaky command of disparate armed self-defence units.⁹¹³ Yet, in a post on 28 February, he stated that the Opolchenie would engage only in a peaceful protest.⁹¹⁴ On 5 March in an interview, he said that his followers were armed.⁹¹⁵

As in Kharkiv, the regional branch of the Communist Party organised the defence of the Lenin monument but in contrast to Kharkiv, the radicals from the Donetsk Republic group were allowed to join them.⁹¹⁶ One can see the Donetsk Republic flags on the photos.⁹¹⁷ On 5 March, it was reported that a group of potentially armed people called “Donbas self-defence” joined the Communist Party in their tents.⁹¹⁸ In contrast to Kharkiv, where Kernes prohibited these meetings personally, in Donetsk, after an attempt to destroy the tent city, the protestors restored it.⁹¹⁹

The pinnacle of political opportunity for the radicals was reached when Pavel Gubarev was allowed to speak at the city council session on 28 February, following the formation of the now Bat’kivshchina-dominated Cabinet in Kyiv. Gubarev held strong pro-Russian views and believed in an unbridgeable rift between the two parts of Ukraine. Anton Shekhovtsov describes Gubarev as a member of the “Russian National Unity” party founded in Moscow in 1990 and formerly a member of the Progressive Socialist

⁹¹¹ “Mer Donetska ne razreshil “Vostochnomu Frontu” zhit’ v kazarmakh i sobirat’ Avtomat”, *Ostrov*, 25 February 2014.

⁹¹² https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=47260&own=1&w=wall-67059574_332; <http://archive.is/Y4dmU>.

⁹¹³ “Moia populiarnost’ – eto ikh glupost’”, *Lenta.ru*, 5 March 2014.

⁹¹⁴ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=47260&own=1&w=wall-67059574_635; <http://archive.is/N187g>.

⁹¹⁵ “Narodnyi gubernator” Donetska priznal, chto ego boitsy vooruzheny”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 March 2014.

⁹¹⁶ “Bez psikhov. Meru Donetska ne ochen’ po dushe “Vostochnyi Front””, *Ostrov*, 25 February 2014.

⁹¹⁷ “Fotofakt. Zhiteli Donetska ne speshat zapisyvat’sia v “Vostochnyi Front””, *Ostrov*, 25 February 2014.

⁹¹⁸ “Dopolнено. Na ploshchadi Lenina v Donetske pod okhranoi bol’shogo kolichestva militsii nachalsia miting v zashchitu edinstva Ukrainy”, *Ostrov*, 5 March 2014.

⁹¹⁹ “Na ploshchadi Lenina v tsentre Donetska neizvestnye napali na palatki kommunistov”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 10 March 2014.

Party of Ukraine headed by Natalya Vitrenko (Shekhovtsov 2014).⁹²⁰ Activist from Donetsk described Gubarev to me in the following terms: “Gubarev was entirely pro-Russian. He could not tolerate different points of view. After the Euromaidan he became very aggressive and even more intolerant”. Activist from Donetsk told me that he blamed Gubarev and “his wife Katya” for the war because “they overestimated themselves” (27 07 2019). In his book *Fakel Novorossii*, Gubarev describes the formation of his strong pro-Russian views at length. There is some indirect evidence that by the beginning of the first major protest on 1 March, Gubarev had already made some key contacts with Strelkov’s group and perhaps some Russian activists. For example, in his V Kontakte post on 27 February, he claims to have travelled to Moscow. He also says that, in his discussion with the people in Moscow, he discovered that they had a “very deep and correct” understanding of what was going on in Ukraine.⁹²¹ On 27 February, he openly stated on his V Kontakte page that “the possibility of an armed civil conflict is very high”. In a string of posts on the same day, he made the following statements: “I am sure that, regardless of the methods of confrontation, we will eventually inhabit a completely different cultural space”; “it seems that united Ukraine has ceased its existence”.⁹²²

On 28 February, Gubarev presented his “ultimatum” at the Donetsk city council meeting. In the ultimatum, Gubarev claimed that the Rada was illegitimate because it was under control of the armed groups from the Maidan. He also called the new Cabinet of Ministers and all the acts adopted by the Rada illegitimate. He pledged that Donetsk regional governor Shyshatskiy should stop making transfers to the State Treasury.⁹²³ According to Gubarev, the city council must recognise itself as the only legitimate government body in the region, in accordance with the resolutions of the all-southeast congress in Kharkiv on 22 February, and dismiss the state security chiefs. Gubarev stated that if the council fails to comply with his ultimatum, the Narodnoe Opolchenie would “take measures accordingly”.⁹²⁴

⁹²⁰ ““Opolchentsy potrebovali Donetskii gorsovet uvolit’ “banderovskogo” gubernatora Shishatskogo – video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 February 2014.

⁹²¹ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=46460&own=1&w=wall-67059574_328 ; <http://archive.is/AKvzv>.

⁹²² Ibid. https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=47260&own=1&w=wall-67059574_352 ; <http://archive.is/3W1SV>.

⁹²³ Ibid.; For the full video “28.02.2014 Pavel Gubarev vystupaet na sessii Donetskogo gorsoveta ot imeni naroda”, *YouTube*, 28 February 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHXblqMZzYU>.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

At this meeting, Gubarev was endorsed by the former city council secretary and, at the time, the Party of Regions' deputy in the Rada Mykola Levchenko,⁹²⁵ who became a self-styled intermediary between the region and the centre and, according to Activist from Donetsk, "made most mistakes; he felt himself a [minor] god". Accordingly, Levchenko said that Gubarev was "90% right". He reiterated the rumour that the "fascists were coming to Donetsk" and blamed the fugitive government for what had happened in the country. Gubarev later stated that Levchenko approached him with a hostile intent (allegedly Levchenko threatened him with a gun), but the mere fact that Levchenko, an elite member, approached Gubarev at all is significant.⁹²⁶ After Gubarev's speech, on 1 and 3 March, the regional administration building was stormed by pro-Russian activists. According to reports and witness testimony, on 3 March, they managed to occupy the debating chamber⁹²⁷ and reached the fourth floor of the building.⁹²⁸ The governor Shyshatskiy resigned under pressure from Gubarev. According to my interview with Journalist 1, "There was the regional council's session behind closed doors during which the deputy chairman of the regional council Oleksandr Tret'yak presented his scenario of how things were going to develop from now on. For many, the scenario was too apocalyptic, so they refused to believe, but Shyshatskiy believed and decided to jump out of the burning plane" (19 07 2019). Gubarev's Narodnoe Opolchenie and Donetsk Republic then continued to appear at all the meetings, making their radical demands.⁹²⁹ Gubarev was proclaimed people's governor on 1 March. There was no similar development in Kharkiv at the time.

What followed was a subtle bargaining game between the elites and the radical forces in the region and between the elites and the centre. This was confirmed to me in an interview with Journalist 1 who said that the elites "bargained to protect their seats, money and avoid responsibility". To Journalist 1, they projected what happened in 2004 onto 2014 but failed to assess the situation properly. "People like Levchenko sought to earn some political capital out of the whole situation". When I asked about Akhmetov, Journalist 1 said that "Akhmetov took too long to make the right decisions" (19 07 2019). In

⁹²⁵ "“Regionaly” golosovali za Iatseniuka, chtoby on ikh zashchitil – rasskazal Levchenko video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 February 2014; Full video here “Sessii Donetskogo gorsoвета v priamom efire video”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 February 2014.

⁹²⁶ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?offset=46760&own=1&w=wall-67059574_1337 ; <http://archive.is/nsR1K>.

⁹²⁷ "Police "evacuate" pro-Russian loyalists from state building in east Ukraine", *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 5 March 2014.

⁹²⁸ "Videofakt. V Donetske zakhvatyvaiut oblastnuiu gosudarstvennuiu administratsiiu", *Ostrov*, 3 March 2014.

⁹²⁹ "Prorossiiskie mitinguiushchie polnost'iu perekryli dvizhenie na tsentral'noi ulitse Donetska", *Ostrov*, 9 March 2014; <https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=08032014>; <http://archive.is/2j7Bv>.

line with my discussion of concentrated patronage, the elites in Donetsk region fell on their old bargaining ploys to retain their concentrated patronage system and accommodate themselves to the new governing network. They made a series of decentralisation and federalisation proposals on their own terms throughout this period. These were deeply clientelistic demands, among which was the right to influence the governor appointments and retain as many taxes as they could in the region. These proposals clashed with the proposals made by Volodymyr Hroisman, from Vinnytsia region, an unknown quantity for Donetsk elites. Budgetary federalism (Elite Member 1 email exchange 22 07 2019) would have allowed the elites to control financial flows between the centre and the region. Also, because under Yanukovych Donetsk received a disproportionate amount of resources from the state budget and the budgetary sequestration decreased, Donetsk regional elites were keen on keeping access to the budgetary resources. With the ability of influencing the regional governor appointments, the elites were hoping to concentrate around one patron again and limit the presence of other political forces in the region. In effect, they were hoping to reduce their transaction costs with the members of rival networks. Accordingly, in their appeal to the Verkhovna Rada on 28 February, the deputies of the city council demanded the establishment of budgetary federalism and for the Rada not to appoint the heads of the regional administrations without the prior discussion with the existing regional councils.⁹³⁰ The most startling example of concentrated patronage demands was the decision to conduct the federalisation referendum on 1 March. It was clearly against the law and it demonstrated that the local elites did not know the law. We might therefore interpret that the Donbas was indeed “a law in itself” because the elites attempted to bend the law, as it were. According to the reports, under the pressure from the pro-Russian activists, Donetsk city council convened an extraordinary session and proclaimed itself the only legitimate body in the region, “until establishing the legitimacy of the laws adopted by the Rada”. Moreover, “with the aim of ensuring the calm of citizens on Donetsk territory and protecting them from possible aggressive demonstrations by radical nationalist forces,” the deputies decided to set up their own municipal police. The elites also demanded that the regional council to call a referendum on Donbas's

⁹³⁰ “Donetskii gorsovet vydvigaet trebovaniia k parlamentu”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 28 February 2014.

future. The city council also unanimously supported the initiative to regard Russia as a strategic partner of Donbas.⁹³¹

These decisions were not constitutional because according to the Constitution from 22.02.2014, only the Rada and the President, and not the regional council, could set up a referendum on the territorial changes in Ukraine. Additionally, in accordance with Article 72 of the Ukrainian Constitution, the all-Ukrainian referendum must be held on request of no fewer than 3 million citizens of Ukraine eligible to vote, on the condition that signatures for such a referendum are collected in no fewer than two-thirds of regions, with at least one hundred thousand signatures from each region. According to Article 73, the questions of territory were decided by an all-Ukrainian referendum.⁹³²

Despite this, the elites were undeterred. During the regional council session on 3 March, 98 deputies voted for a referendum.⁹³³ Again, they demanded a referendum to be held on the territory of Donetsk region and to set up public formations in line with the law of Ukraine "On participation of citizens in defending public order and state borders". They were guided by Articles 7, 10, 140, 144 of the Constitution of Ukraine and Articles 10, 43 of the law of Ukraine "On local self-government in Ukraine". This was highly misleading because Articles 7, 10, 140 and 144 of the Constitution did not say anything about the referendum. In fact, Article 144 stated that if the deputies disregard the law in any way, they would be punished. The Law on Self-Government stated that a local council cannot make decisions outside its purview (Article 7.3).⁹³⁴ Still, on 13 March the governor Shyshatskiy was reported to have created a working group to put the referendum forward. According to *Novosti Donbassa*, the referendum working group included Eduard Akopov, the head of the *Eastern Front* (a self-defence unit), the representatives of "Donbas Rus" organisation and people with radical views, such as Tetiana Marmazova.⁹³⁵

⁹³¹ "Councillors in east Ukrainian city refuse to recognize central government", *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 1 March 2014.

⁹³² "Kontsytutsiia Ukrainy ot 22.02.2014", *Zakon.Rada*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80/ed20140222>.

⁹³³ "Ukraine's Donetsk regional council votes to hold referendum as building occupied", *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 3 March 2014.

⁹³⁴ "Pro misteve samovriaduvannia v Ukraini", *Zakon.Rada*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-%D0%B2%D1%80>.

⁹³⁵ "Andrei Shishatskii nachal gotovit' referendum v Donetskoi oblasti", *Novosti Donbassa*, 21 March 2014.

Similarly, the elites neglected the Law on Self-Government which stated that any self-defence units had to be properly registered. Thus on 4 March, the mayor Luk'yanchenko stated that the elites were going to institute self-defence units.⁹³⁶ There had already been several groups of men patrolling the city council building; Luk'yanchenko said that these were the representatives of civil society working closely with the deputies of the city council guarding the public order.⁹³⁷

The radicals continued to access the largesse of the local elites. Gubarev was again allowed to speak at the city council session on 3 March, and there was information circulating that Donetsk city council set up a referendum for the Donetsk region to become part of Russia.⁹³⁸ It was reported that Donetsk's own self-defence force was being created; and that they began forming the interim government.⁹³⁹

Gubarev and his Nardone Opolchenie then continued to make radical demands. On 4 March, he issued the following statement: "The main questions that would be put forward during the referendum are the question of the future statehood (Donetsk region as part of a federal Ukraine, Donetsk region as an independent Donetsk Republic, Donetsk region as part of the Russian Federation); Who is going to be the next governor: Gubarev or Taruta; The language to be used on the territory of Donetsk region."⁹⁴⁰

Radicalisation quickly diffused in the region. On 5 March, during a meeting in Sloviansk, the town mayor Nelya Shtepa said that she was willing to give money for a sociological survey to find out what the residents of Sloviansk were supporting.⁹⁴¹ On the same day there was a meeting for autonomy in Sloviansk.⁹⁴²

The elites converged with Gubarev on their demands for budgetary federalism. In his post on 3 March, Gubarev promised to retain 70% of taxes in the region.⁹⁴³ Elite Member 1 confirmed to me his statements in the press about the budgetary federalism. He sent me a large list of his publications, many

⁹³⁶ "Mer Donetska schitaet, chto samooborona mozhetsia stat' osnovnoii munitsipal'noi militsii", *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 March 2014.

⁹³⁷ "Krepkie obshchestvenniki okhraniat Donetskii gorsovet ot prorossiiskikh aktivistov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 March 2014.

⁹³⁸ "Situatsiia v zdanii DONOGA. Shishatskii – spiker. Nachalsia shturm: obnovenie online video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 March 2014.

⁹³⁹ "Zakhvatchiki Donestkoi OGA formuiut "vremennoe pravitel'stvo Donbassa", *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 3 March 2014.

⁹⁴⁰ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=04032014&cw=wall-67059574_9809%2Fall; <http://archive.is/UFM7d>.

⁹⁴¹ "Miting v Slavianske za edinuiu Ukrainu: Mera Neliu Shtepu uvezli na skoroi video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 6 March 2014.

⁹⁴² "V Slavianske prizyvaiut vykhodit' na miting protiv voiny i za avtonomiiu", *Novosti Donbassa*, 5 March 2014.

⁹⁴³ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=08032014&q=70%25&cw=wall-67059574_7302; <http://archive.is/uq0y9>.

of which described the advantages of budgetary federalism in Ukraine. According to Serhiy Bogachov, the representatives of Donetsk region at the Congress on 22 February were supposed to press for budgetary federalism and decentralisation of government, so some of the key responsibilities, such as the registration of businesses, would be passed to the regional government.⁹⁴⁴ Serhiy Bogachov continued to advocate a referendum throughout this period.⁹⁴⁵ Accordingly, on 5 March, Donetsk treasury building was seized and occupied for a brief period by Gubarev's group in order to stop budgetary transfers to Kyiv.⁹⁴⁶ People commenting on Gubarev's page said they disagreed with the continuing practice of transferring money to Kyiv to "rebuild the Maidan".⁹⁴⁷

The Party of Regions' deputies continued to make demands for federalisation in this period. On 13 March, they issued the following motion: "It is necessary to change the approach to the tax and budgetary policies, in accordance with the principles of budgetary federalism, that is the autonomous functioning of the budgets at different levels... [We must have] a territorial principle of tax levying: taxes should be paid where productive forces are located and the added value is formed...".⁹⁴⁸ Similarly, Borys Kolesnikov advocated federal solutions for Ukraine throughout this period.⁹⁴⁹ On 19 March, the governor Shyshatsky sent a communique to Kyiv requesting an urgent revision of the law on referendums, to allow a municipal police force to be formed, and budgetary laws to be changed.⁹⁵⁰

The election of Mykola Levchenko to the position of the chairman of the local Party of Regions on 19 March⁹⁵¹ and his role as an intermediary signalled to the radicals that they could press their radical

⁹⁴⁴ "Donetskaia delegatsiia v Khar'kove budet trebovat' detsentralizatsii vlasti i biudzhethnogo federalizma – sekretar' Donetskogo gorsoвета", *Ostron*, 22 February 2014.

⁹⁴⁵ "Sekretar' Donetskogo gorodskogo soveta predlozhil provesti Vseukrainskii referendum o vozmozhnom federativnom ustroistve", *Ostron*, 21 March 2014.

⁹⁴⁶ https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=08032014&q=%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE&w=wall-67059574_27754_r28961; <http://archive.is/eRnxq>; https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=08032014&q=%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE&w=wall-67059574_23333; <http://archive.is/SqdO6>; "200 chelovek blokirovali ulitsy vokrug zdaniia Donetskogo SBU i shatali trolleybus – foto / video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 6 March 2014.

⁹⁴⁷ <https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=08032014>; <https://archive.is/2j7Bv>

⁹⁴⁸ <http://www.ostro.org/Donets'k/politics/articles/439910/>

⁹⁴⁹ "Konferentsiia partii regionov vse video", *Novosti Donbassa*, 22 March 2014.

⁹⁵⁰ "Shishatskii trebuet russkii iazyk vtorym gosudarstvennym", *Novosti Donbassa*, 31 March 2014.

⁹⁵¹ "Predsedatelem Donetskoï oblastnoi organizatsii partii regionov izbran Levchenko", *Novosti Donbassa*, 21 March 2014.

demands. Levchenko was famous for his Ukrainophobia. On 6 March Levchenko continued to endorse Gubarev at meetings.⁹⁵² On 12 March, during a Party of Regions conference, Levchenko offered to bail out Gubarev, who had been imprisoned by the SBU by that time. Luk'yanchenko promised to discuss this at the next meeting of the regional branch of the Party of Regions.⁹⁵³ On 27 March, Levchenko made his own federalisation proposals: "I support the political models of Germany and USA. A federal state structure strengthens the state." He also said that he had already lodged some proposals along federalisation lines in the Rada before: "The income tax to remain in the regions, the regional head of the Ministry of the Interior and the regional prosecutor to be appointed in agreement with the authority representing the community; State Treasury has no right to distribute and use the money of the local budgets".⁹⁵⁴

During this period, the elites fragmented which prevented them from establishing effective control over the radicals. This was especially true when it came to the newly appointed governor Serhiy Taruta. In effect, the elites were using Gubarev's "election" as people's governor to force Taruta out. Activist from Donetsk told me in the interview that "Gubarev's popularity was sky-rocketing; he was even more popular than Akhmetov" (27 07 2019). Journalist 1 in an interview with me stated that the power of the regional governor in Ukraine usually stemmed from his control over the prosecutor and the local law enforcement agents. The governor would use his informal connections with these structures to control the region. However, "the appointment of Taruta was very unfortunate," Journalist 1 said, "Kyiv wanted a figure entirely subservient to itself and with poor control of the region. Taruta made a big mistake when he accepted this position; his appointment was not confirmed with the local elites as it should have been and had been traditionally with the previous governors". Activist from Donetsk also confirmed to me that Taruta's appointment was unfortunate: "By that time, he had lived abroad for many years and did not know the context at all. He could talk a lot but do very little". Hence, on 4 March, the prosecutor filed a complaint with the district administrative court against the city council's decision to conduct a

⁹⁵² "V deputata Levchenko stonniki "narodnogo gubernatora" Donetskoi oblasti brosil ogryzkom. A on khotel obniat' Gubareva", *Ostrov*, 6 March 2014.

⁹⁵³ "Luk'yanchenko ne mozhет vziat' na poruki "narodnogo gubernatora" Gubareva", *Novosti Donbassa*, 12 March 2014.

⁹⁵⁴ "Dlia Levchenko vopros federalizatsii seichas ne aktualen", *Novosti Donbassa*, 27 March 2014.

referendum on 1 March.⁹⁵⁵ This demonstrates that the elites did not act in concert and that the prosecutor was not controlling the situation. The governor Taruta,⁹⁵⁶ who criticised the Party of Regions for corruption,⁹⁵⁷ in later interviews claimed that he could not make anyone agree on an appropriate course of action.⁹⁵⁸ Taruta stated that the border with Russia has to be closed to stop people with radical ideas and GRU from arriving to Ukraine. He and his brother dug out a trench along the 90-mile Donetsk-Russia border to fend off invasion.⁹⁵⁹ In his 2015 interview, he stated that on 6 April, when the regional administration building was occupied, the *siloviki* or the SBU stopped controlling the situation.⁹⁶⁰

Even after the violence on 13 March, the elites did not prohibit people from conducting their meetings, in contrast to their Kharkiv counterparts. On 14 March, Donetsk city council filed a lawsuit with Donetsk district administrative court to ban the meetings on 15 and 16 March because of the danger of violent clashes.⁹⁶¹ On 15 March, the district judge declined the request arguing that there was “no evidence of danger”.⁹⁶² Donbassrus user explained on his blog that it was the Russian Bloc party who won the case against the city council in the district court.⁹⁶³ Konstantin Pozhidaev, the head of the local police stressed that only the court and the judge could prohibit the meetings; neither the police nor the city council could do this.⁹⁶⁴

The patterns of protest and protest violence mirrored the actions of the elites. On 16 March the pro-Russian protestors stormed the prosecutor building in Donetsk and mounted the Russian flag on the building. The protestors were planning to storm and occupy the office of Serhiy Taruta.⁹⁶⁵ On the same day, the SBU building was stormed and the flag of the Donetsk Republic and the Russian flag were

⁹⁵⁵ “Donetskaia prokuratura obratilas’ v sud s trebovaniem otmenit’ reshenie gorsoвета o iazyke, strategicheskome partnere i militsii”, *Ostrov*, 4 March 2014.

⁹⁵⁶ “Oligarch tightens Kiev grip on restive Donetsk; battle for Ukraine; Governor's action” 7 March 2014

⁹⁵⁷ “Taruta nameknul, chto Shishatskii “vymyl” ogromnye sredstva iz regiona”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 23 March 2014.

⁹⁵⁸ “Interv’iu Sergeia Taruty: nuzhno zakryt’ granitsu s RF”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 March 2014; www.youtube.com/watch?v=1/4ExyZWfjHbRs.

⁹⁵⁹ “Pro-Russian protests diminish in eastern Ukraine’s Donetsk region; New Donetsk governor tamps down rumors of fascist rampage - and interest in Moscow”, *Washington Post.com*, 3 April 2014.

⁹⁶⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=1/4ExyZWfjHbRs.

⁹⁶¹ “Mer Donetska prosit sud otmenit’ mitingi 15 i 16 Marta”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 14 March 2014.

⁹⁶² “Sud reshil, chto prorossiiskie mitingi v tsentre Donetska “ne nesut opasnosti”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 15 March 2014; “Court in Ukraine’s Donetsk refuses to ban pro-Russian rallies”, *BBC Monitoring Newsfile*, 15 March 2014.

⁹⁶³ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/03/16/>; <http://archive.is/1FJuF>.

⁹⁶⁴ “Militsia hochet zapretit’ provedenie mitingov v tsentre Donetska”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 3 April 2014.

⁹⁶⁵ “V Donetske prorossiiskie aktivisty osvobodzhaiut zdanie prokuratury (obnovleno)”, *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 March 2014; <https://peter-slyadek.livejournal.com/2014/03/17/>; <http://archive.is/YYXkz>.

mounted on the building.⁹⁶⁶ The protestors entered the SBU building freely on 16 March.⁹⁶⁷ The SBU was stormed again on 21 March.⁹⁶⁸ People continued to protest under Russian flags in Mariupol⁹⁶⁹ and Donetsk.⁹⁷⁰ Similarly, people began setting up checkpoints.⁹⁷¹ There was a recruitment into armed units in Sloviansk.⁹⁷² After 16 March, Donbass People's Militia organised a checkpoint near Yasinovata traffic police on the way to Donetsk. People begin mobilising and checkpoints appear one after another. It was reported that by 19 March there were around 10 similar checkpoints.⁹⁷³

By 31 March 2014, the elites continued to demand radical changes from the Rada.⁹⁷⁴ Thus Donetsk mayor issued the following statement: "The current crisis in the country can be "settled only by amending the Constitution"; Council members believe it necessary for "the Constitutional Assembly to resume work immediately and start drafting a new version of the constitution that would guarantee decentralisation of government by giving the local authorities broader powers and responsibility for the state of affairs in the region, the creation of regional and district executive bodies, and the formation (pending parliamentary elections) of a two-chamber parliament, where the upper house will express the interests of regions and its members will have the right of legislative initiative," the appeal said.

⁹⁶⁶ <https://donbassrus.livejournal.com/2014/03/16/>; <http://archive.is/1FJuF>

⁹⁶⁷ "Mitinguishchie khodili k Donetskomu SBU, potom poshli v ISD i ushli v oblovet", *Novosti Donbassa*, 16 March 2014.

⁹⁶⁸ "Donetskie separatist prodolzhaui razvlekat'sia – obzor pressy", *Novosti Donbassa*, 25 March 2014.

⁹⁶⁹ <http://www.ostro.org/Donets'k/society/news/440421/>

⁹⁷⁰ https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=31032014&w=wall-3223620_45965%2Fall; <http://archive.is/AuXTu>;

⁹⁷¹ I have collected ample evidence of these checkpoints being set up spontaneously by the people: https://vk.com/wall-3223620?day=21032014&w=wall-3223620_41069; <https://archive.is/MsMgG>; https://vk.com/wall-67059574?day=31032014&w=wall-67059574_167205%2Fall; <http://archive.is/biQl7>; <http://www.interpretermag.com/ukraine-liveblog-day-37-russian-troops-on-the-move/>; <https://archive.is/hXYQw> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01eWab_Wvvc; <https://frankensstein.livejournal.com/2014/03/28/>; <https://archive.is/S8kdv> "Kommunal'shchiki i militsiia Gorlovki pytalis' razblokirovat' blokpost prorossiiskikh aktivistov", *Novosti Donbassa*, 4 April 2014; "Blokposty separatistov na donetskikh dorogakh", *Ostrov*, 27 March 2014.

⁹⁷² <https://vk.com/wall-67349914?own=1>; <http://archive.is/yGBtm>; <https://vk.com/wall-65540286?day=28022014&q=%D0%A1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%8F%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%20>; <http://archive.is/j5ljE>.

⁹⁷³ "Gorod na zamke: na v'ezde v Gorlovku mestnymi aktivistami i dobrovol'tsami organizovan blok-post", *Gorlovka.ua*, 19 March 2014.

⁹⁷⁴ "Donets'k regional council demands official status for Russian language Itar-Tass", *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 31 March 2014.

This clashed with the proposals made by Hroisman, who vowed to use the Polish example at government decentralisation. Hroisman's proposals contained the provisions to vest regional governors with a controlling function. This did not suppose that the regional councils would influence governor appointments. Hroisman also proposed to increase the role of the State Treasury in order to control how the regional budgets were performing. The process of decentralisation was supposed to be slow and would involve all tiers of government. The proposals envisaged to retain 25% but not 50% or 70% of regional taxes in the region.⁹⁷⁵

The elites in Donetsk, however, continued to make their concentrated patronage demands. On 1 April, Shyshatskiy send a letter to Hroisman outlining his own decentralisation proposals:⁹⁷⁶ "A new Constitution that would decentralise the government; the creation of executive committees of the regional and district council; the creation of a two-chamber parliament: the upper chamber would express the interests of the regions which would lead to the exclusion of lobbying by industrial-financial groups; Russian to be the second state language. Budget must be fair: the greatest share of the taxes must remain in the region; 50% of the profit tax must remain in the region; the candidates to the positions of the governor must first be agreed with the regional authorities".

After the regional administration building was stormed and occupied by radical pro-Russian protestors on 6 April and Donetsk People's Republic was proclaimed in the captured building on 7 April, Donetsk mayor Luk'yanchenko issued the following statement blaming the new government for incorrect policy. Again, it contained concentrated patronage demands: "New Ukrainian authorities do not quite understand what is happening in the Donbas now," Lukyanchenko said, "Indeed, the capture of administrative buildings is illegal and bad. That separatist slogans are voiced in city squares is unacceptable. Yet all these problems are a consequence of the new authorities' incorrect policy, their unwillingness to look into problems to understand them. A recent statement by parliament-appointed Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk did not contain "specific proposals" to improve the situation, such as

⁹⁷⁵ "Pravitel'stvo odobrilo reformu po detsentralizatsii vlasti", *Novosti Donbassa*, 2 April 2014.

⁹⁷⁶ "Idei spikera Donetskogo oblsobeta Shishatskogo o detsentralizatsii vlasti nashli podderzhku u vitse-prem'era", *Ostrov*, 1 April 2014.

the measures to protect the Russian language, ensure election of governors or explain the delegation of powers in decentralisation procedure”.⁹⁷⁷

10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how political opportunities were opened for the Anti-Maidan protest action in both Kharkiv city and Donetsk region. I have argued that the Russian Spring did not emerge in a vacuum and refuted the hypothesis that the ethnic patron Russia had a significant role to play in the emergence of the Russian Spring. On the contrary, I have demonstrated that the political opportunities for protest were opened by the local elites. In Kharkiv, they were opened because the Euromaidan stood in the long line of political protests threatening to unseat the regional elites. Therefore, the elites in Kharkiv reacted instrumentally, that is to protect their hold on power, in line with the theoretical expectation of the literature on elites (Easter, 2000; Hale, 2015, 47; Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116) and elites and conflicts (Kaufman, 2001). In Donetsk, they were opened because the elites were expecting Yanukovych to stay, which is consistent with the expectations of the literature on patronal politics (Hale, 2015). I also discussed the critical juncture – the changes in Kyiv – in detail. In the sections that followed, through process tracing, I have demonstrated how moderate pro-federal protest mirrored the diffused nature of Kharkiv region. In line with the theoretical literature on process tracing, I discussed alternative explanations for why the moderate protest emerged in the region. In the section on the radical protest in Donetsk, I have shown how the concentrated patronage claims made by the local elites interacted with the radical claims made by the activists in the region. In line with the theoretical expectation in the literature on political opportunity, the radicals in Donetsk were given confidence to press with their demands, despite their relatively disorganised nature (Almeida, 2008; Tarrow, 2011, 163).

⁹⁷⁷ “Donetsk mayor blames Kiev for wrong policy , Itar-Tass” , *ITAR-TASS World Service*, 8 April 2014.

Conclusion

After the events of 6 to 8 April, the pro-federalisation protest movement in Kharkiv subsided slowly. The most radical activists were either too intimidated or detained.⁹⁷⁸ By 3 May, local ordinary people began complaining on social media about the lack of direct armed action on the part of the protestors. On Apukhtin's page, people urged the protestors to arm themselves to resist the "junta". On 23 April, a participant commented on Sut' Vremeni page: "I am ashamed of the lack of [direct] action in Kharkiv; all these meetings are useless, we must follow the example of Donetsk and Lugansk".⁹⁷⁹ Another participant commented on the same page: "Nothing can be achieved through these peaceful meetings. We have lost time. The government doesn't care about us. A kind word with a pistol has a stronger effect than simply a kind word. But there is no leader!!!!".⁹⁸⁰ A participant commented on Apukhtin's page that metro stations were closed by the local elites, therefore, the local people could not reach the meeting point.⁹⁸¹ By 8 May, according to the military analyst Dmytro Tymchuk, the threat of secession in Kharkiv decreased significantly. Tymchuk noted positively the work of the local elites and the SBU in countering separatism in Kharkiv.⁹⁸² In Donetsk, the protests culminated in the storming and occupation of the regional administration building on 6 April, the arrival of Igor Strelkov in Sloviansk on 12 April 2014 and the Ukrainian government's decision to launch an Anti-Terrorist Operation in Sloviansk.

On 11 May 2014, Donetsk People's Republic held a referendum on independence from Ukraine, which was supported by an overwhelming majority of the Donbas residents. The validity of these results is debated. Since 2014, the Ukrainian government launched several offensives against the rebellious republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, some of which were successful, but many of which have been repeatedly repulsed by the separatist and Russian state forces. Since 2015, the "contact line," that is the

⁹⁷⁸ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=400&own=1&w=wall-67607008_1526; <http://archive.is/ZclCG>.
https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=480&own=1&w=wall-67607008_591; <http://archive.is/ArqXi>.

⁹⁷⁹ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=600&q=%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3&w=wall-25354839_13380_r13385; <http://archive.is/ICtL7>.

⁹⁸⁰ https://vk.com/wall-25354839?offset=520&q=%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3&w=wall-25354839_13109_r13176; <http://archive.is/DHTM0>.

⁹⁸¹ https://vk.com/wall-67607008?offset=380&own=1&w=wall-67607008_1547; <http://archive.is/usquo>.

⁹⁸² "Ugroza separatizma v Khar'kovskoi oblasti snizilas' – Sovet natsional'noi bezopasnosti", 057, 8 May 2014.

border between the government-controlled and separatist-controlled territories has calcified, in that no side has been making any significant territorial gains. The Ukrainian and separatist forces continue attacking each other's positions; each side reports failed ceasefires almost every day. The conflict has claimed over 10,000 lives, and currently, there is no conflict resolution plan on which all parties would agree. The rebellious republics have amassed significant resources – even if many are imported from Russia, especially military hardware - and demonstrated considerable legislative and state-building capacity. They are now deeply entrenched, while the republics' people are not at all eager to be integrated back into Ukraine.⁹⁸³

In this project, I have demonstrated through the empirical analysis that protest intensity and the degree of protest violence should not be automatically linked with armed conflict outcomes. More specifically, through protest cataloguing and the analysis of the dynamics of protest, I demonstrated that historically Kharkiv city had greater general protest potential than the entire Donetsk region. This predisposed the region to further political instability. I also demonstrated that during the Euromaidan and the Russian Spring protest waves, protest intensity and protest violence were similar in both regions. Kharkiv showed a greater propensity to protest violence during the Euromaidan protest phase. Such similarities point to the theoretically important conclusion that the people in both regions were animated by similar emotions. Moreover, both regions could have potentially become sites of an armed conflict if the Russian non-state actors were guided by these protest dynamics when choosing where to start the insurgency.

I then discussed my independent variable, that is the nature of political patronage in both regions. I first presented Ukraine as a state of networks in order to highlight how volatile politics was in the centre. The centralised nature of Ukraine and its evolution into a state of networks acted as structural constraints on the regional elites. I then presented the second set of structural constraints, that is, the nature of the political economy in the regions. These two structural constraints shaped the regions into diffused or concentrated patronage regions. The elites, therefore, functioned within a set of tight constraints shaped by the combination of the centralised nature of Ukraine and the nature of the regional

⁹⁸³ Tetiana Malyarenko, "Evolving Dynamics and Conflict Potential in Eastern Ukraine", Policy Memo 569, *Ponars Eurasia*, 1 October 2019.

political economy. Actual acquaintance of elites at different levels through patronage eased these structural constraints. I then discussed how the elites managed to secure resources for their regions under different governing networks and then discussed the aspects of elite survival through learning, especially in diffused patronage polities. I then discussed the time lag between the change of the governing network and the deal struck between the regions and the centre. I presented how the elites in the concentrated patronage polity of Donetsk region developed a set of certain stable bargaining ploys, which helped them preserve their concentrated patronage system.

I then used process tracing and protest cataloguing to discuss the aspects of my intervening variable, which is radical or moderate protest. I started with process tracing the Anti-Maidan contention in both regions. I demonstrated that the Russian Spring did not emerge in a vacuum and not with the assistance of the ethnic patron Russia. Instead, political opportunities for the Anti-Maidan protest were opened by the local elites, for a variety of reasons. In Kharkiv, they were opened as part of the local Party of Regions' elites' response to the Euromaidan. This was because the Party of Regions' elites were challenged by the local opposition parties and ordinary people in the past, which made these elites insecure and more aggressive towards protests that were not in their interest. In Donetsk, political opportunities were opened for the Anti-Maidan activists because the elites wanted to remain loyal to Yanukovich government's course. Therefore, before the Russian Spring commenced, both regions started with similar initial conditions, with the political opportunities being open for the Anti-Maidan.

I treated the change of the governing network in the centre in February 2014 as the critical juncture. With the change of the governing network, the intervening variable also changed: it became radical or moderate pro-Russian and pro-federal protest. Depending on the nature of the regional patronage – concentrated or diffused – the local elites would encourage radical or moderate protest. Therefore, I focused on the interaction between the local elites and specific types of activists. I refuted the hypothesis that the political opportunities for specific types of activism are opened externally by ethnic patrons. Through process tracing, I demonstrated that political opportunities were opened locally by the local elites. I also described the pro-federal and pro-Russian challengers and demonstrated that they were relatively weak and disorganised prior to the Russian Spring. In addition, congruent with the theoretical literature on process

tracing, I discussed alternative explanations of why there is an armed conflict in Donetsk region and no armed conflict in Kharkiv.

The project contributes to the extant theories in a number of ways. Firstly, I provide ample empirical evidence that contradicts the main premise of the history and identity approach to the Donbas conflict by examining the case structurally similar to Donetsk region, that is, Kharkiv city. The history and identity approach overwhelmingly focuses on the dynamics of protest in the Donbas and links it to the region's history and the peculiar political beliefs developed by the region's residents. It argues that due to the widespread dissatisfaction of the Donbas' residents with the new Kyiv government's policies after the critical juncture in February 2014, a local conflict was bound to occur in the Donbas (Giuliano, 2015a; Kudelia, 2014a; Loshkarev and Sushentsov, 2016; Matveeva, 2016; Nicoara and White, 2016; Sakwa, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). This literature sits within the larger literature on ethnic conflicts and the broader literature on emotions and politics which demonstrates how people engage in protest, protest violence and conflict as a result of experiencing the emotions of different valence (fear or anger) (Pearlman, 2013; Petersen, 2011). These emotions are intersubjective experiences arising from shared historical and cultural conditions or "emotional climates" (Baele et al., 2016; Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The empirical literature on the Donbas conflict and the corresponding theoretical literature on ethnic conflicts, emotions and politics accord primary importance to the local people and their emotions and identities in spurring some countries or regions within countries to conflict. Developing the insight on shared "emotional climates" gleaned from the literature on emotions and politics to fit our comparative case, it can be argued that areas characterised by similar "emotional climates" are predisposed to similar protest dynamics and, by extension, to similar conflict outcomes. I demonstrate in this project that, indeed, people can be animated by similar emotions and be predisposed to protest, protest violence and eventual conflict in similar ways. In fact, a region that does not become a site of a violent conflict can demonstrate a greater propensity to protest violence at different stages of the protest wave. I therefore argue that assigning the responsibility for conflict to the local people and their emotions and identities fails to explain a violent outcome in one case and a peaceful one in the other.

Secondly, I have also refuted the hypothesis that states that foreign actors are to blame for the incipience of conflict in a region adjacent to an ethnic patron.⁹⁸⁴ This approach attributes the responsibility for the Donbas conflict to the actions of Russian non-state and state actors, the former acting with the connivance of some local actors (Czuperski et al., 2015; Mitrokhin, 2014; Sutyagin, 2015; A. Wilson, 2016; A. Wilson, 2014). This literature borrows its conceptual insights from the wider literature on ethnic patrons and their role in conflicts in adjacent states, which argues that neighbouring states would intervene – covertly or overtly – in local conflicts in adjacent states, especially if there is an ethnic kin that straddles borders (Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2004; Salehyan, 2006). Similarly, Laitin and Jenne argue that this ethnic kin would radicalise if the ethnic patron sends a sufficiently strong signal that it would intervene on behalf of the ethnic kin if the host state fails to satisfy the ethnic kin’s demands (Jenne, 2007; Laitin, 2001). By contrast, I have demonstrated through detailed empirical analysis that political opportunities for such radicalisation come from elsewhere. I have borrowed insights from the literature on political opportunity (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 1978) and showed that radical actors do not have to possess significant organisational resources to make their demands and that political opportunities are external to these actors. It is the local elites who provide them with these political opportunities.

More specifically, the local elites open political opportunities for specific types of activists and for a variety of reasons. The “instrumentalist” or “rationalist” literature on elites and conflicts tells us that elites often act in ways that protect their hold on power (de Figueiredo, M., and Weingast, B. 1999; Gagnon, 1994; Jones, B., 1999; Kaufman, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004; Woodward, S., 1999). I have demonstrated that in Kharkiv, the elites acted in such a way during the Anti-Maidan protest wave. The literature on patronal politics, by contrast, predicts that elites would want to remain loyal to the course of their patron in the centre and open political opportunities for specific types of protest accordingly (Hale, 2015). This took place in Donetsk during the Anti-Maidan protest wave.

My main puzzle, however, was to explain the local elites’ divergent behaviour towards the local political protest when the informal governing network changed in Kyiv in February 2014, that is following the critical juncture. I have supplemented the conceptual insights offered in the social movements literature

⁹⁸⁴ It can be argued that the Russians captured the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk after summer 2014 and Russia is now the most important patron in the republics.

with the concepts derived from the literature on patronage, political clientelism and, specifically, Henry Hale's book *Patronal Politics*. I engaged with the concepts of patronage and actual acquaintance that lies at the basis of Hale's discussion of patronage and argued that the local elites would open political opportunities for radical or moderate protest depending on the type of regional patronage that applies to them. This system of regional patronage broadly describes the lines along which resources are delivered to the region and the "safeguards" that keep the elites in their seats and their assets protected.

I have demonstrated that, over time, Ukraine evolved into a more flexible polity or a "state of networks". The literature on the Soviet Union (Easter, 2000) and modern Russia (Kononenko, V., 2011) provided me with this key insight. I demonstrated how this introduced a certain degree of volatility in the politics in the centre and acted as a structural constraint on the regional elites. With the formal aspects of centre-periphery relations remaining the same throughout the period in question (the governors were appointed by the President), regions developed their own systems of patronage depending on the type of their political economy. I therefore effectively "married" the literature on social movements, patronage and political economy and demonstrated how regions developed diffused or concentrated patronage systems. The diffused patronage region of Kharkiv "plugged into" various patronage channels, especially during the period of the divided-executive (Hale, 2015) and secured resources for the enterprises thanks to the governors' lobbying efforts. By contrast, in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk, owing to the nature of the enterprises themselves and other factors, the economy was largely privatised. Concentrating patronage and using the resources of actual acquaintance ensured that this property was protected (Hale, 2015). The concentrated patronage region of Donetsk benefitted from one network's continuing access to power (Easter, 2000; Hale, 2015, 47; Sabic, C., and Zimmer, K. 2004, 116). The most important financial patron of Donetsk region, Rinat Akhmetov, was able to secure resources for his enterprises when Yanukovich rose to power in the centre. Overall, Yanukovich's career rise to the centre benefitted Donetsk region, which is consistent with the expectations in the literature on networks and Easter's argument, in particular (Easter, 2000, 34). The elites in this region had vested interest in preserving the concentrated patronage system.

I followed by the discussion of the aspects of elite learning (Grzymala-Busse, 2010) in diffused and concentrated patronage systems. I demonstrated how the practice of appointing clients from rival

networks led to conflicts in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv and how this contributed to the processes of elite learning. This confirmed the theoretical expectation in the literature on informal politics in Eastern Europe. Gzymala-Busse writes on elite learning, the iterative process in which different networks are engaged, and how this worked for the elites in Poland and Hungary: “The more elites are advanced on the basis of pragmatic competence rather than ideological orthodoxy ... and the more these parties engage in informal negotiation with opponents and policy experimentation, the more diverse and useful the skill sets and reputations of elite actors”(Grzymala-Busse, 2010, 327). Similarly, Sherrill Stroschein observes in the context of Hungarian and titular majority mobilisations in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine in the late 1980s – early 1990s that iterative processes of learning across mobilised groups can lead to moderating effects on contention (Stroschein, 2012, 25). “Repeated, incremental exchanges between groups teach lessons,” she writes (Stroschein, 2012, 240).

By contrast, the elites in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk were isolated and no elite learning took place in their region. This also reduced the transparency of information flows in that the regional elites were very rarely scrutinised by the centre. I also discussed the time lag between the change of the informal governing network in the centre and a viable deal struck between the centre and the regional elites. I have demonstrated that the elites in the diffused patronage systems attempted bargaining with the centre only once and this was unsuccessful. By contrast, the elites in the concentrated patronage systems had a rich experience of bargaining with the centre in order to preserve access to power and keep their concentrated patronage system. When there was an electoral contest preceding the change of the governing network, the elites encouraged popular protest in order to coordinate themselves around the emerging patrons and make sure their preferred patrons continued accessing power in the centre (Hale, 2015). This follows from the key insight by Hale on electoral contest: “a victory in a head-to-head high-stakes contest between rival networks can be among the most powerful shapers of expectations as to which network is likely to be dominant in the future” (Hale, 2015, 342).

My observations about the nature of patronage in Ukrainian regions fit with the arguments advanced by scholars of regional elite or patronage systems elsewhere, such as Catherine Boone who writes in the context of rural Africa. Boone focuses on the communal structures in Senegal and Ghana where she discovers patterns of “concentrated” or “dispersed control over persons and resources” (Boone, 2003,

21). In regions characterised by concentrated hierarchy, political control is pooled in the hands of a narrow set of actors (Boone, 2003, 21). In such places, rural elites acquire an unparalleled bargaining power vis-à-vis the state and the ability to control peasants and mobilise collective action. This corresponds to the empirical situation in Ukraine, where regions varied according to their diffusion or concentration of patronage, and therefore there was variability in regard to the regional elites' bargaining strategies and capacities. Overall, Boone concludes that "even patron-client relations in Africa vary in their legitimacy, staying power, dependence on state resources, and implications for collective action" (Boone, 2003, 320), an observation that can be made of Ukrainian politics, too.

I have taken the observations on diffused and concentrated patronage in Ukraine a step further and argued that polities exhibiting concentrated patronage would experience conflict while those exhibiting diffused patronage systems would not. In line with the most recent, interactive approaches in the social movements literature (Onuch, 2015) (Stroschein, 2012), I focused on the interactions between the local elites and local activists as opposed to local people and their identities and emotions. I demonstrated how the local elites in the concentrated patronage region of Donetsk opened political opportunities for radical protest, which complicated their relations with the centre and invited Russian non-state actors. I argue simply that when Strelkov arrived to Donetsk and the Anti-Terrorist Operation began, it was too late to bargain. In the context of Yugoslavia, Stroschein observes that military intervention can have a detrimental impact on contention. She writes, "military force is more than just an external shock to a smooth-running moderation dynamic between groups. It also changes the calculations of elites. Military backing for extremist positions reduces the need for elites to obtain public resonance or support of their goals. ... the presence of weaponry also reduces the ability of masses to mobilize to push agendas counter to elites, such as moderate agendas" (Stroschein, 2012, 240). By contrast, in the diffused patronage region of Kharkiv, the local elites used their knowledge of the law to defuse radical protest, so that it did not disrupt their relations with the emerging patrons in the centre and the competing networks in the region. As a result, radical contention failed to emerge in the region and the Russian non-state actors failed to appear there to incite a war. The project therefore borrowed key insights from the interactive or "relational" (Stroschein, 2012) approaches to political mobilisation and the role of elites. As Stroschein writes, "the *relational* approach to the study of social life ... focuses on ties and interactions as primary

units of analysis rather than emphasizing individual entities or actors. Prioritizing the dynamics of *interaction* among the elites and masses of each group reveals the general causal mechanisms that drive these processes” (Stroschein, 2012, 4). This project therefore attempted to be as eclectic as possible, in line with the literature on process tracing, and endeavoured to adapt conceptual insights from a variety of literatures and weave them together with the rich empirical discussion.

Appendix 1: Codebook

Prior to the Russian Spring

1. Date:
 - a. 22-Nov
 - b. 23-Nov
 - c. 24-Nov
 - d. Etc.
2. Place:
 - a. Kharkiv
 - b. Donetsk
 - c. Horlivka
 - d. Sloviansk
 - e. Etc.
3. Number of Participants:
 - a. 2,000
 - b. 500
 - c. 600
 - d. Etc.
4. Claim:
 - a. Anti-Maidan
 - b. Euromaidan
5. Organisations:
 - a. Euromaidan
 - b. Communist Party of Ukraine
 - c. Progressive Party of Ukraine
6. Street action:
 - a. Streets blocked
 - b. Streets not blocked
 - c. Protesters hold a march through the streets.
7. Protest start location:
 - a. Shevchenko Monument (unless specified).
 - b. Freedom Square
 - c. Lenin Square
 - d. HOGA
 - e. Etc.
8. Protest end location:
 - a. MVD
 - b. SBU
 - c. Etc.
9. Target:
 - a. Mayor
 - b. Academy
10. Attack:
 - a. Attack by titushki
 - b. No attack
 - c. Attack by fellow organisation
11. Number of titushki if known:
 - a. 100
 - b. 200
 - c. If "5 buses" : 100

- d. If “several tens” (neskol’ko desyatkov): 30
 - e. Etc.
- 12. Equipment used or planned to be used by titushki:
 - a. Molotov cocktails
 - b. Eggs
 - c. Etc.
- 13. Type of violence:
 - a. Egg-throwing
 - b. Serious violence against people, e.g. beatings and knifings
 - c. Equipment
 - d. Transport
 - e. Buildings
- 14. Number injured:
 - a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. If “several” (“neskolko”): 5
 - d. Etc.
- 15. Number killed:
 - a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. Etc.
- 16. Police response:
 - a. Detained
 - b. Not detained
 - c. Responded quickly
 - d. Responded slowly
 - e. Cooperated with titushki
 - f. Used weapons against titushki
 - g. Opened proceedings
 - h. Not opened proceedings
- 17. How many detained:
 - a. 20
 - b. 30
 - c. Etc.
- 18. Elite response:
 - a. 1 – for some response
 - b. 0 – for no response
 - c. Kernes speaking to protesters
- 19. Elite response 2 or qualitative elite response:
 - a. Kernes speaking
- 20. Outcome:
 - a. Titushki won
 - b. Titushki lost
 - c. Protesters dispersed
 - d.

Russian Spring

I coded meetings that began peacefully and then became violent separately. One good example of such a meeting is the one organised by Kernes on 1 March 2014. It started off as a peaceful meeting and then ended with the storming of the regional state administration building and mass beating of the Euromaidan activists barricaded in the building.

1. Date:
 - a. 22-Nov
 - b. 23-Nov
 - c. 24-Nov
 - d. Etc.
2. Place:
 - a. Kharkiv
 - b. Donetsk
 - c. Horlivka
 - d. Sloviansk
 - e. Etc.
3. Number of Participants:
 - a. 2,000
 - b. 500
 - c. 600
 - d. If thousands – 3000
 - e. If “tens of thousands” : 30,000
 - f. Etc.
4. Demands – it made sense to change this to demands as the Euromaidan demands echoed the demands in Kyiv and did not change while the Russian Spring demands constantly changed
 - a. Federalisation referendum
 - b. Euromaidan
5. Organisations:
 - a. Euromaidan
 - b. Communist Party of Ukraine
 - c. Progressive Party of Ukraine
 - d. Svoboda
 - e. Udar
 - f. Batkivschina
6. Street action:
 - a. Streets blocked
 - b. Streets not blocked
 - c. Protesters hold a march through the streets.
7. Protest start location:
 - a. Lenin Square
 - b. HOGA – Kharkiv regional administration building
 - c. Etc.
8. Protest end location:
 - a. MVD
 - b. SBU
 - c. Etc.
9. Target:
 - a. Mayor
 - b. Academy
10. Attack:
 - a. Attack by titushki
 - b. No attack
 - c. Attack by fellow organisation
 - d. Attack on the administrative building
 - e. Attack on property
 - f. Attack on police
11. Number of titushki if known:

- a. 100
 - b. 200
 - c. If “several tens” (neskol’ko desyatkov): 30
 - d. If several hundreds (neskolko soten):300
 - e. Etc.
- 12. Equipment used or planned to be used by titushki or any other perpetrators of violence:
 - a. Molotov cocktails
 - b. Eggs
 - c. Etc.
- 13. Type of violence:
 - a. Egg-throwing
 - b. Serious violence against people, e.g. beatings and knifings
 - c. Equipment
 - d. Transport
 - e. Buildings
- 14. Violence against journalists and their equipment:
 - a. 1 – for violence
 - b. 0 – for no violence
- 15. Number injured:
 - a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. If “several” (“neskolko”): 5
 - d. Etc.
- 16. Number killed:
 - a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. Etc.
- 17. Number of police:
 - a. 30 if “neskolko desyatkov”.
- 18. Police response:
 - a. Detained
 - b. Not detained
 - c. Responded quickly
 - d. Responded slowly
 - e. Cooperated with titushki
 - f. Used weapons against titushki
 - g. Opened proceedings
 - h. Not opened proceedings
- 19. Police response2:
 - a. Barricaded themselves in the administrative building
 - b. Not detained
- 20. How many detained:
 - a. 20
 - b. 30
 - c. Etc.
- 21. Elite response:
 - a. 1 – for some response
 - b. 0 – for no response
 - c. Kernes speaking to protesters
- 22. Outcome:
 - a. Titushki won
 - b. Titushki lost

- c. Protesters dispersed
- 23. Symbolic actions and objects used by protesters:
 - a. Russian flags
 - b. St George ribbon
 - c. Posters with Putin and Yanukovych
- 24. Legal?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Appendix II

Tables: Equalisation grants to Donetsk city and Donetsk region compared, in thousand hryvnia

2007 (Tymoshenko government)

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donetsk	0	0	149845,3	31,14
L'viv	0	0	60786,2	17,02
Kharkiv	0	0	79928,4	9,31
Donetsk region	3347,1	0,03	0	0
L'viv region	285982,9	6,60	0	0
Kharkiv region	204775,8	3,37	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2007 rik", *Zakon. Rada*;

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/489-16>

2008 (Tymoshenko government)

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donetsk	0	0	337 739,6	54,43
L'viv	0	0	86 179,3	10,74

Kharkiv	0	0	98 087,3	8,25
Donets'k region	134 794,7	0,86	0	0
L'viv region	503 871,1	8,13	0	0
Kharkiv region	392 815,5	3,98	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2008 rik ta pro vnesennia zmin do deiakikh zakonodavchykh aktiv Ukrainy" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/107-17>

2009 (Tymoshenko government)

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donets'k	0	0	301 153,1	23,56
L'viv	0	0	60 031,8	7,16
Kharkiv	0	0	13 571,4	1,08
Donets'k region	306 195,9	1,75	0	0
L'viv region	617 487,4	9,13	0	0
Kharkiv region	488 601,4	4,32	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyi biudzheth Ukrainy na 2009 rik", [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/835-](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/835-17)

[17](#)

2011 (Azarov / Yanukovich government)

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donets'k	0	0	207 718,1	13,47
L'viv	0	0	64 778,2	6,22
Kharkiv			2 626,6	0,15
Donets'k region	658 385,3	3,19	0	0
L'viv region	664 528,5	8,37	0	0
Kharkiv region	397 778,1	2,18	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2011 rik", [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2857-](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2857-17)

[17](#)

2012

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donets'k			281,648.2	20.37
L'viv			50,073.6	4.07
Kharkiv	43,670.2	0.22	0	0
Donets'k region	803,430.1	3.05	0	0

L'viv region	841,625.0	9.18	0	0
Kharkiv region	495,769.5	2.46	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2012 rik", [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4282-](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4282-17)

[17](#)

2013

Administrative unit	Equalisation grant or transfer from the State	Percent from total revenue	Negative transfer or Contribution to the State	Percent from total revenue
Donets'k			280,563.2	17.15
L'viv			91,147.9	6.71
Kharkiv			71,660.5	3.16
Donets'k region	810,820.2	2.99	0	0
L'viv region	1,215,357.2	12.42	0	0
Kharkiv region	925,456.2	4.44	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2013 rik", [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5515-](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5515-17)

[17](#)

The tables below illustrate that the levels of subventions were greater for Donetsk under Yanukovich than for other regions.

Tables 33 – 35: Select subventions to Donetsk region compared, in thousand hryvnia

2013

Administrative unit			
	Subsidies to poor families	Subsidy 1	Subsidy 2
Donets'k region	3,121,888.9	828,716.0	131,647.9
L'viv region	2,536,529.0	382,243.5	27,996.8
Kharkiv region	1,936,889.6	591,913.0	22,681.8
Donets'k city	0.0	0.0	0.0
L'viv city	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kharkiv city	19,707.1	0.0	0.0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2013 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5515->

[17](#)

2012

Administrative unit			
	Subsidies to poor families	Subsidy 1	Subsidy 2
Donets'k region	2,436,787.2	877,291.8	105,555.5
L'viv region	1,935,215.6	336,757.5	21,043.8
Kharkiv region	1,553,747.5	587,623.5	24,248.1
Donets'k city	0.0	0.0	0.0
L'viv city	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kharkiv city	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2012 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4282->

[17](#)

2009

Administrative unit			
	Subsidies to poor families	Subsidy 1	Subsidy 2
Donets'k region	1 038 820,7	543 023,6	34 085,9
L'viv region	832 777,1	200 127,1	13 325,4
Kharkiv region	632 694,6	437 189,5	21 478,7
Donets'k city	0	0	0
L'viv city	0	0	0
Kharkiv city	0	0	0

Source: "Pro derzhavnyii biudzheth Ukrainy na 2009 rik" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/835-17>

Sampling pro-Russian mobilisation groups on vk.com and Odnoklassniki

I now have an exhaustive list of the archived walls of the pro-Russian self-determination movements and parties on Vkontakte. The list was compiled using snowball sampling, that is I looked for a movement's or party's vk.com page when the movement or party was referred to in an academic or newspaper article or its name figured on another movement's or user's vk.com page. Following this, I used Google advanced search engine to find the archived walls. For a small number of movements, archived walls do not exist due to the limited functionality of vk.com or content deletion. I had an extensive communication with the vk.com support team regarding this, and they said that not all groups have searchable archived walls. On Odnoklassniki, identical groups can be found by using the site's search engine. The only problem is that all these groups will be current, that is there are no archives available for any group due to the limited functionality of Odnoklassniki.

Sampling of posts and comments on vk.com.

In sampling posts, I excluded most of the picture-based posts (the so-called *demotivatory*), derogatory posts, rhetorical or “empty” posts and news items. I included posts that described action and indicated intention (for the purposes of process tracing) and some kind of constructive interpretation of the situation. Below are the tables with examples of exclusion and inclusion criteria for posts and comments. All of these come from Pavel Gubarev's Narodnoe Opolchenie's archived wall.

Examples of posts falling under the exclusion criteria

Criteria	Example	Reason for exclusion

<p>Rhetorical or “empty” posts</p>	<div> <p>НАРОДНОЕ ОПОЛЧЕНИЕ ДОНБАССА (Павел Губарев) 24 фев 2014</p> <p>Если уж совсем честно сказать, то это США Украиной спасает себя от дефолта. Спасение доллара- война!</p> </div> <p>Translation: To be completely honest, the USA is saving itself from a default by using Ukraine. A war will help save the dollar!</p>	<p>The post does not add any knowledge about the behaviour of the activists and their interpretation of the events</p>
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News items

No new information regarding activists, people or elites



НАРОДНОЕ ОПОЛЧЕНИЕ ДОНБАССА (Павел Губарев)

28 фев 2014

Сейчас будет пресс-конференция Януковича в Ростове-на-Дону

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkFyw6AtEUg>

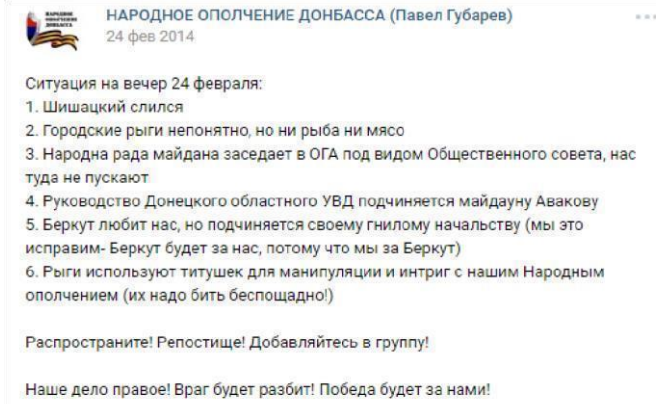
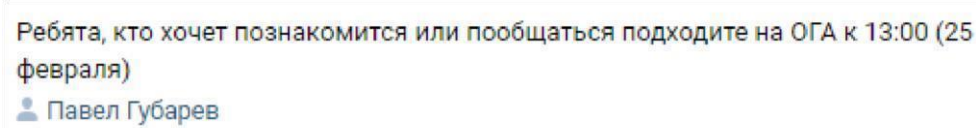



Пресс-конференция Виктора Януковича в Ростове-на-Дону

203 просмотра

Translation: Yanukovych’s press conference in Rostov


Inclusion criteria examples

Criteria	Example	Reason for inclusion
Offline behaviour: intended action and actual behaviour	 <p>Outline: here Gubarev is describing the situation in Donets'k on 24 February, primarily regarding the elites</p>	<p>Describes the intended and actual action of the activists</p> <p>The use of evocative language points to the emotional predisposition and cognitive bias of the activist</p> <p>Comments on the behaviour of other actors – the elites</p>
Offline behaviour	 <p>Here Gubarev is inviting local people to join him next to Donets'k Regional Administration</p>	<p>Illustrates the offline action</p>

Offline behaviour	 <p>НАРОДНОЕ ОПОЛЧЕНИЕ ДОНБАССА (Павел Губарев) 27 фев 2014</p> <p>Завтра планирую выступить на сессии городского совета Донецка перед депутатами.</p> <p>Люди, что бы вы хотели чтобы я сказал нашим депутатам?</p> <p>Here Gubarev is saying that he is planning to talk to the deputies at Donets'k city council</p>	As above
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In sampling comments, I sampled according to the comment length, the absence of derogatory language, the level of engagement with the situation and interpretation, the reference to concrete geographical location and concrete behaviours.

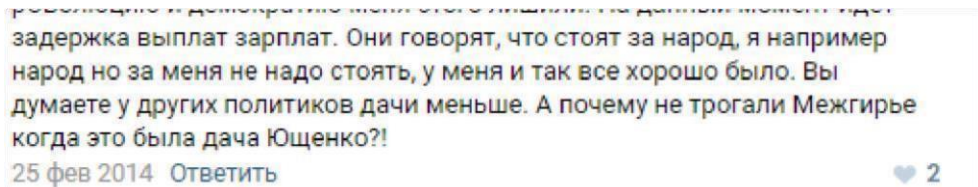
Exclusion criteria for comments

Criteria	Example	Reason
Length	 <p>Клоунада 15 мар 2014 Ответить</p> <p>“clowns”</p> <p>Translation:</p>	Too short
Empty rhetoric + derogatory	<p>Очнитесь... Запад - это реальные враги и относится к ним нужно соответственно. Везде и во всем иметь их, а не быть использованными</p> <p>28 мая 2014 Ответить</p> <p>Translation: The West are the real enemies and we should relate to them accordingly.</p>	No new knowledge, no illustration of offline behaviour

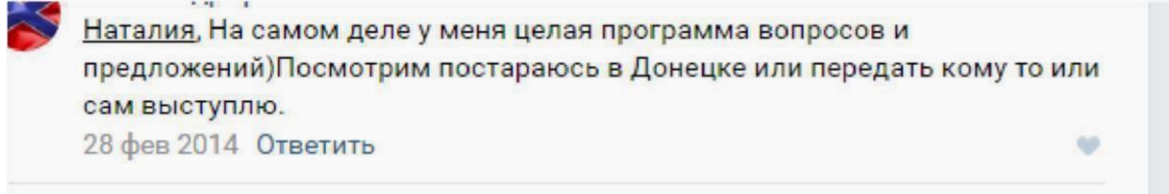
Empty rhetoric	<p>Немцы истребляли тысячами евреев и русских, что без сомнения является самым громким и ужасным преступлением века. Украинская же власть, истребляет своих же соотечественников на своей же земле, что без сомнения является ужасной трагедией современного мира. Люди хоть раз преступившие грань между жизнью и смертью, уже не смогут остановиться, они почувствовали вкус власти, они уже считают себя</p> <p>Brief translation: here the commentator is describing how the Germans were killing Jews and Russians “by thousands”.</p>	No new knowledge, no illustration of offline behaviour
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Inclusion criteria for comments

Criteria	Example	Reason for inclusion
Constructive interpretation of the situation	<p>теоята, доорый день! извините, что захожу в ваш кружок по интересам. Хочу понять, от кого Вы хотите защищаться? Так как со стороны, это очевидная защита от ветряных мельниц. Ощущение, что Вы защищаетесь от вымышленного врага. Если не сложно поясните.</p> <p>Translation: people, excuse me... I want to understand whom you are defending yourselves against.... I feel you are defending yourselves against invented enemies. Can you explain?</p>	<p>Length; absence of derogatory language</p> <p>Constructive interpretation of the situation</p> <p>This particular post was followed by a detailed</p>

		<p>discussion which revealed the emotional predispositions and information interpretation of people sympathising with Narodnoe Opolchenie</p> <p>Also, this post presented one of the few dissenting views which can be interpreted as a disconfirming case (Patton 2015)</p>
	<p>Павел, а знаете, к сепаратизму призывов и не звучало. Основной идеей еще в субботу (когда начали собираться активисты) было- мы готовы к вежливому диалогу, но если будут попытки применить силу, будем отвечать тем же. Это если в двух словах.</p> <p>Translation: we were not invoking separatism. The main idea of the meeting on Saturday was to express readiness for “a polite dialogue” but if they try to use force against us, we will answer back.</p>	Indicates offline action
Offline behaviour and concrete grievance	 <p>задержка выплат зарплат. Они говорят, что стоят за народ, я например народ но за меня не надо стоять, у меня и так все хорошо было. Вы думаете у других политиков дачи меньше. А почему не трогали Межгирье когда это была дача Ющенко?!</p> <p>25 фев 2014 Ответить</p>	Indicates concrete grievance – “wage arrears” in this case

<p>Offline behaviour and highly emotional engagement with the situation</p>	<div> <p>Сегодня я впервые со времен юности или детства...плакал. Смотрел на безумное "вече", утверждение министров, вполне серьезные интервью"кого вы пИдтрымуетЭ?"...и слезы шли сами собой..</p> </div> <p>Translation: today I have been crying for the first time since youth and childhood. I watched this crazy "Veche" and the proclamation of the Cabinet of Ministers...</p>	<p>This comment comes from one of my first interviewees resident in Donets'k. It indicated a highly emotional engagement with the situation. The participant did not deny experiencing these emotions in the interview.</p>
<p>Offline behaviour</p>	<div> <p>я в районе ЖД 27 фев 2014 Ответить</p> </div> <p>Translation: I am in the area of the railway station</p>	
<p>Indicative of the information interpretation and emotional predisposition</p>	<div> <p>В первую очередь, необходимо создать Донецкий штаб народного правления и координации действий по восстановлению власти в нашей области!!! Первый пункт действий, это недопустить перевода в Киев ни копейки Донецких денег!!! Пункт второй - это посадить в тюрьмы предателей из властей Донецка, предавших наш народ и давшего согласия подчиняться аккупантам Киева!!! Пункт третий, это национализация предприятий и всех шахт Донецкой области!!! Пункт четвертый, это референдум о автономии Луганской области, вынес ей на</p> </div> <p>Brief translation: here the commentator says that no money should be transferred to Kyiv</p>	<p>This illustrates the prevalent rhetoric during the early phase of the protest movement following the ouster of Yanukovich: the dissatisfaction with the local elites, the need to</p>

		establish a “peoples’ government”
Triangulation with interviews	 <p>Translation: Natalia, I have a whole programme of questions and suggestions. I will try to pass them in Donetsk’k.</p>	<p>This comment indicates that the commentator lived in Donetsk’k at the time of the mobilisation and was engaged in the protest. I contacted the commentator for the purpose of the interview</p>

Comment on the behaviour of other key actors - Local elites	<p>Катерина, Вот сволочь какая. Сам отказался прилюдно ехать на восстановление Киева ,а чужие деньги взял и перечислил. Ну как можно им верить-предатели проклятые!</p> <p>1 мар 2014</p>	<p>This illustrates how the people of Donetsk interpreted the behaviour of the local elites and their growing dissatisfaction with them</p>
Dissenting views	<p>Роман, в Донецке есть люди, которые считают, что все крики про нацистов истерический бред, что они никого не тронут и вообще няшки. Немного, но есть.</p> <p>1 мар 2014 Ответить  3</p>	
Civic journalism	<p>Кирилл, больше 10 000, я там был и все видел. Стояли от памятника Ленину до главпочтамта, транспорт стал.</p> <p>1 мар 2014 Ответить  8</p>	<p>This tells us what the commentator saw himself – this can be triangulated with newspaper reports</p>

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Activist in Kharkiv, Interview 16 07 2019

Activist from Donetsk, Interview 27 07 2019

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Protest Organiser in Kharkiv 2, Interview, 28 09 2018

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